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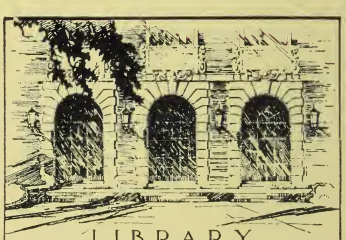

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CARL BARTLETT;

OR,

WHAT CAN I DO?

BY

D. S. ERICKSON,

AUTHOR OF "GOOD MEASURE," ETC.

NEW YORK:

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Earl Bartlett.

CHAPTER I.

"YES, I should like to go, I cannot tell you how much; but it is useless to think of it, it is impossible," said Mrs. Bartlett.

"Impossible! I don't see that it is. You would like it, wouldn't you, Arthur?" asked Mr. Carleton Randolph.

"Oh yes, certainly I should; and now I am at leisure, as I never was before since I entered on active, responsible life."

"The best way is for you, Arthur, to go

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with Carl; you need the recreation and change."

Mr. Bartlett shook his head, but the lady went on. "Yes, you can go, and you will write home very often, and tell us about all that you see. The children and I will enjoy your letters almost as much as if we saw for ourselves."

"You would enjoy the letters, no doubt; but the description would not be the reality. I cannot agree to start on the grand tour without my wife; thus much I will decide; the rest I leave with you: if you are sure you would not be happy in going, to be parted from the children for so long a time, why then we remain at home; but if you can devise any plan for leaving your maternal cares on this side of "the big pond," we will go. It would be rather a sudden start, to be sure, but that is all the better for the young folks, and I suppose you do not need much time for preparation."

"So it is the children who veto my bill," said Mr. Randolph. "I don't see any reason why they should. Surely, my namesake, Carl, is old enough to be trusted for a few months; so I should think is Emily, and as for little Lulu, I have heard you say, she is just as happy with mother as with you. I don't see that you have the slightest occasion for anxiety."

"I should not feel the least for Lulu, she and mother are such good friends, and I hardly think that Emily would be much care to her; but Carl — No, it would never do; it's too much of a burden to put upon her; besides, she has petted him from his baby-hood, and has always been so obedient to him that she would not restrain him."

"So then, it comes to this; that you refuse to go, on account of Carl, a boy twelve years old, not a bad boy either; in fact, a pretty good boy. You must stay at home to keep

him out of mischief, lest he may cut his finger, or bump his head; lest he may get into some childish difficulty, you give up a chance you may never have again. Here is Arthur; he says he can go. Who knows what may happen in the business world next year to keep him at home. I am released for a time. I have planned for it these two years. I have not said anything about it in my letters, for fear I might be disappointed. I have thought that you and Arthur and I would go over the same route, stand in the same places, look at the same beauties of nature and art, that I did fifteen years ago. The only thing I wanted then was, to have my sister and my old crony Arthur at my side, and many a time I have promised myself, if my life was spared, I would have the pleasure without the lack. Really, I did not think you would say, No."

Mrs. Bartlett gazed upon her twin brother whom she had seen only at long intervals

since her marriage. His large practice as a lawyer in a distant city, had left him but little leisure. She would gladly have made almost any sacrifice for his gratification; but the mother's love, the mother's tenderness, must be, could be sacrificed for no one. The two girls might be left in the charge of their indulgent grandmother; but Carl, generous, whole-souled boy that he was, needed guidance, needed the silken cord held in skilful, gentle hands. She recurred to the many times when grandmother had not had the courage to say no, if "looking-glass and hammer," or like suitable toys had been demanded. She remembered that some of his schoolmates were not those she would have chosen for her son's associates. She thought of many things that would have entered no other mind than that of an affectionate mother, and she broke the silence that had followed her brother's appeal, by saying be

seechingly, "Don't say anything more, dear Carl: you know, you must know how glad I should be to gratify you. You know too, that for both Arthur and me to make the round of European travels with you would be inexpressibly delightful. Don't say anything more, please."

Mr. Randolph had managed many a difficult case in court, had led many a forlorn hope on legal battle ground, and had learned, when he was driven from one mode or point of attack, to try another. He was a very persevering man, and now turned to Mr. Bartlett. "Really, Arthur, I do think Madge carries this altogether too far; cannot you say a word for my side?"

"I never interfere in her management of our children," was the reply; "she understands them far better than I do. But, Margaret, cannot you think of some plan, some one you would feel like trusting with your care for six months?"

"And you, too, Arthur? No, I can think of no one; at least of only one person, and she has already duties enough of her own. I could not propose such a thing to her."

"Who is that?" asked Mr. Bartlett.

"Maria Howard, my old friend; you remember her, Carl?"

"Capital, if we could only manage it," said Mr. Bartlett; "but with her school — no, we ought not to mention it to her."

"Is Carl in her school now?" asked Mr Randolph.

"No, she dismissed him a year ago; she does not wish to keep boys under her care after they have reached a certain standing."

"I thought she was well posted in all the higher branches."

"Yes, she is; but she thinks it is better for boys, as they grow older, to be taught by a man. It is wonderful, though, with what almost romantic attachment she inspires

every boy who has ever been under her tuition; they are, to a man — to a boy, I mean — her faithful knights. She makes them work, and work hard, too."

"Puts them on their mettle, I suppose, and they find they have more capacity than they thought," said Mr. Randolph.

"Yes, there is a good deal of encouragement about her; she contrives to make her boys ashamed of doing anything but their best."

At this moment Mrs. Bartlett was called out. Mr. Randolph, who had been walking the floor with a quick tread, approached his brother-in-law's chair and said, — "Come, Arthur, join me in a conspiracy, or give me permission to carry one through in your house. I don't believe in meddling in family affairs. I have a wholesome dread of the blows from both sides," he continued, laughing; "but in this case I will run the risk."

"What now, Carl?" asked Mr. Bartlett.

"Why, don't you see Madge has made a damaging admission. I propose to bring Miss Howard into court, and then put the said admission in as evidence against the defendant."

"I don't know about that," said Mr. Bartlett. "I never did try to deceive my wife."

"Oh, nonsense, we will undeceive her soon enough." Exit Mr. Randolph, in search of his nephew. He met Mary in the hall, and asked, "Can you tell me whether Mr. Carl has come in?"

"Och, tu be shure, yes, sir, it's in the dinin' rhoom, he is. Misther Corl and Miss Merley a tearin' up papers over ivery thing."

The uncle did not stop to listen to the complaints of the voluble maid of Erin, but passed on to the dining room, where he found Carl, "the younger of that name," at work on a large kite. He had mucilage bottle and

newspapers on the floor, and was covering the frame, two light sticks tacked crosswise, with a twine drawn tightly around for ar. edge. Emily was sitting on the sofa, making bobs.

"Oh, Uncle Carl," said the boy, "I do wish you'd help me put this paper on. I can't make it stay where I want it to."

"It is some time since I have made a kite, but I used to be a pretty good hand at the business; let me see if I have forgotten the trade. I came in to have a talk with you, but I can work and talk too. Carl and Emily, do you love your mother much?"

Both the children looked up in wonder. "I don't see why you should ask such a question, uncle," said Carl; "of course we do."

"Yes, of course you do. A person who loves another is willing to do a great deal for the loved one. How much are you willing to do for your mother?"

"How much, Uncle Carl?" said the boy "Any thing in the world; but what can I do?"

"What can I do?" echoed Emily.

"Do you think you could live without her for six or eight months? Do you think you could cheerfully let her go away and be gone as long as that, if you knew she would enjoy it very much? Do you think you could help her to go?"

"Mamma going away?" said Emily, and her chubby face stretched to twice its usual length.

"I declare," said Carl, drawing a deep breath, "that's pretty tough."

"Yes, it is tough, but is not your love for your mother tough enough to bear the strain?"

"It's hard on a feller," said Carl, drawing another breath from the bottom of his lungs.

"It is hard," replied the uncle, "but have

you never been hard on her? I know I was sometimes, on my mother, and sorry enough I have been since."

Carl and Emily thought of the firm affection which had often met their waywardness.

"Yes, I will let her go," said Emily. "Where is she going?"

"We do not know that she is going at all," replied Mr. Randolph, "but I have been trying to persuade her to go abroad with your papa and myself, and she thinks her children cannot spare her."

"I can spare her," exclaimed Carl. "I will spare her. I'll go and tell her so. I won't get mad once while she is gone; I won't plague Em, and I won't — I won't do any thing I oughtn't. Will you, Em? but it's pretty tough."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Randolph, almost repenting his attempt to separate mother and

children even for a few months. "Would it be as tough if Miss Howard would come here and stay?"

"No, not half so tough."

"That would be grand," said Emily.

"I am going to see her," said Mr. Randolph, "and I may tell her that if she will be your visitor while papa and mamma are absent, you will be very hospitable, you will both try to do what she wishes you to; in short, you will be just as good a boy and girl as you can be."

"Yes, yes," was the answer in chorus.

Mr. Randolph knocked at the door of Miss Howard's school-room. "I'm a black conspirator in search of a confederate," said he.

"Ah!" said the lady, "I thought you were one of the brightest ornaments of the —— bar."

"Well, then, if you like something more

legal, I am an officer summoning a witness."

"I am quite at a loss for your meaning."

"To make a long story short, Arthur and I propose carrying my sister, Mrs. Bartlett, off to Europe."

"A very good proposal; but what can I do to aid you?"

Mr. Randolph then accounted what had passed that morning at Mr. Bartlett's house, and closed by saying, "I have laid my case before you. I really do not think you will find my nephew and niece a very great care, and my mother will attend to the remainder of the household. Will my witness appear and testify for me?"

"You say you wish to take the next steamer which sails from here?"

"Yes, I am very desirous of engaging staterooms in the Africa; she sails in a fortnight."

"You can give me a few hours for consideration; till to-morrow, perhaps."

"Certainly. I do not wish to hurry you."

"To-morrow you shall have my decision."

Mr. Randolph took his leave.

The next afternoon he sat in the parlor, turning over an illustrated copy of Pilgrim's Progress, when Miss Howard entered. Mrs. Bartlett was summoned and soon appeared. The visitor lost no time in explaining the object of her call.

"Margaret, I hear you think of a European tour; I am very glad of it, and have come to propose that you leave Carl and Emily in my charge. They will miss you, of course, but I have been your guest so often, that perhaps home will seem more like home if I am here, and I can keep you constantly informed of their welfare."

"You are very kind, Maria, but that is too much to ask of you."

"Indeed," returned Miss Howard, smiling, "I was not aware that you had asked it. Then you are not willing to trust Carl and Emily with me?"

Mrs. Bartlett glanced at her brother, and saw the expression of mingled triumph and amusement on his features.

"This is some of your work, Carl."

"I have gained my case," said the lawyer, with a hearty laugh.

"You always did manage to have your own way," retorted his sister.

"Nothing like trying what you can do," was the cool reply.

It was settled that Miss Howard should remove to her friends' house the following week, that she might be fairly installed before their departure.

The state-rooms were engaged, and the two weeks seemed to the children like a day, so busy were they in helping to arrange for the comfort of the travellers.

The last morning arrived, two hacks were at the door; the breakfast was scarcely tasted. All found parting, as Carl had said, "tough" work. The father and mother almost repented their agreement. Mr. Randolph helped Mrs. Bartlett into one of the carriages, rather unceremoniously pushed Carl in after her, jumped in himself, and took Lulu on his knee. Mr. Bartlett assisted Miss Howard and Emily to seats in the one in which he was to ride. Down into the business streets they were driven, by the market house, and soon found their carriages helping to form a motley collection of vehicles. Carts, drays, trucks, market wagons, immense teamsters' wagons, chaises, carryalls, hacks and coaches composed a throng which seemed hopelessly entangled. Now stopping, now moving slowly, after a trial of patience, our friends were at last on board the ferry boat, Mr. Randolph's carriage next to the chain, much to

the alarm of Lulu, who put her head out of the window as far as her small neck would allow, and told Uncle Carl, "Those horthes were walking right into the water, straight, they thertainly were." The engine commenced its regular strokes, and seemed to Carl to say —

"Ease her — stop her,
Any passengers for Joppa?"

Not many minutes elapsed before the party reached the deck of the ocean steamer. Mr. Randolph took Carl and Emily below and showed them the state-rooms; then they went down to see the immense engines, the furnaces with their glowing fires fed by grimy men who looked as if they had passed their lives in a coal mine. He explained all to them as far as he could, and finally, taking out his watch, said, "Now we must go and say good bye." The time which Carl had been dreading for a fortnight had come. He

must part with his father and mother from whom he had never been separated for a whole month before. Lulu and Em, they would cry of course. Lulu was a little thing, and besides, they were both girls; but for a boy to cry — and before so many people! What should he do? He swallowed till he was nearly choked, and then gave up the effort to control himself as a bad job, rested his head on his mother's shoulder and sobbed. Mr. Bartlett drew him away, and his uncle led him to the carriage. Miss Howard followed with Emily and Lulu.

"Come Carl," said Mr. Randolph, "be a man; your mother is watching you; don't let her go and leave you so; look up bright, that is one thing you can do for her."

The boy summoned all his resolution, and with a smiling face returned the parting salutation. Mr. Randolph directed the hackman to wait till the steamer was out of sight, and

went back to his sister. The floating monster began to move; the children watched it till they could not distinguish it from the vessels, and then returned to the house, which seemed lonely and vacant.

Mrs Randolph opened the door. "Ol' Grandma, why did not you go down with us?"

"When you have bid good bye as many times as I have, my dear, you will want to say it as quick as you can."

"Grammur, mamma's going to thleep in a little tinty room no big'n that," said Lulu, holding her small hands a few inches apart, "an' the's going to thleep on a shelf. Thee'll fall off, I know thee will."

"No darling, she won't. Let us go up stairs and tell stories."

"And we must off to school," said Miss Howard.

CHAPTER II

IT was on the twenty-third of April that Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett took leave of their children. We will not follow them on their travels; it is with their son and daughter that we are to become more particularly acquainted. Through the young people we may occasionally hear of papa, mamma, and Uncle Carl.

For a few days time hung heavily on the hands of brother and sister; quiet had taken the place of the activity of preparation; play seemed like work, and as for lessons, they were drudgery. The thought of loved parents came between numerator and denominator; between nominative and objective, and made

sad confusion. During the first week Emily commenced in school hours, an average of three letters a day, addressed to "my dear darling mamma." One after another was thrust into her desk, too much blotted with tears to send.

Carl's report, which he handed to Miss Howard at the end of the month, showed a state of things but little better. She had borne patiently with Emily's faulty recitations, hoping that time would work a cure; but she had promised to write to the parents once a week, if it were only a short note, and give them a faithful account of their home affairs. She must commence the fulfilment of her promise that evening, and concluded to appeal to her young friends for aid.

"Not a very good record, Carl," said she, as she signed the school report.

"No, it ain't," replied the boy, in a blunt tone. "I can't help it; how can a feller get

his lessons when he's all the time thinking of something else?"

"But why should a fellow be thinking of something else when he ought to be learning his lessons?"

"I don't see how a feller can help it. I can't, any way."

"I'm sure I can't," said Emily. "When I began to get my geography lesson to-day, I was looking on the map for London, and then I thought that's where mamma 'll be very soon; and I wondered how far they'd got now, and then I thought may be they'd get drowned before they'd get there, and they'd never come back, and I shouldn't have any father and mother and Uncle Carl,— and"—a flood of tears closed the sentence.

Miss Howard sincerely pitied the weeping girl, and passed her arm about her waist as she said, "And so, learning the geography lesson, which was your duty, a duty you could

perform, was neglected that you might spend your time and faculties on something over which you have no control, and in a way which is an actual injury to you and your father and mother."

"I don't see what harm it can do father and mother," said Carl.

"I will tell you a story which is exactly in point. It is an old story. Perhaps you have heard it before; but sometimes we can see our own mistakes better if they are reflected in those of others. Years ago there sailed from one of our northern ports a sea captain; a bluff, hearty man, who bore the rough sea life without grumbling. At home in his snug house, supplied with many comforts, he left a devoted wife, who, in every gust that shook her blinds, every shower that pattered on her tight roof, every clap of thunder that rattled over her head, every flash of lightning that gleamed in her comfortable

rooms, formed imaginary gales, tempests. water spouts or fires at sea for her husband. One day the wind was very high, and at night increased, till, as the sailors say, it "blew great guns." The captain's wife had suffered tortures all day; but when night came, the increasing storm doubled and trebled her anxiety. The rain dashed against the windows, and the wind bent the great trees as if they had been switches. The poor woman laid down, but did not sleep. How could she? She in her comfortable home, while her husband was tossing on the waves, it might be clinging to the wreck of his good vessel; it might be, alas, struggling with the angry, cruel sea. No, she could not sleep, she ought not to sleep while he was in such peril. She went out into the garden and climbed into a great brass kettle which she had suspended from the limb of a large tree"

"What a foolish, silly woman," said Emily.

"And there she swung," Miss Howard went on, without noticing the interruption, "taking a strange sort of comfort in thinking that she was undergoing privations resembling those her husband was enduring, for by this time she was fully persuaded that he was wrecked, and if alive, was in the midst of terrible peril.

"A few days after, the ship Patriot hove in sight. The wife gave up sighing, and began singing one of the old Scotch songs that had been a favorite one with the captain before they were married:

"'And are ye sure the news is true?
And are ye sure he's weil?
Is this the time to think o' wark?
Ye jauds, fling by your wheel,
Is this a time to think o' wark
When Colin's at the door?
Rax down my cloak—I'll to the quay,
And see him come ashore,

For there's nae luck about the house,
There's nae luck at a';
There's nae luck about the house
When our guidman's awa'.'

"Down to the wharf she went. One of the first questions she asked her husband was, 'Where were you the night of the fifteenth? Wasn't the storm awful? I certainly thought you'd be wrecked?' 'Storm? No, we haven't run afoul any storm since we sailed for home. We shipped a sea once in a while, but we don't call that anything.' 'Yes, the fifteenth; you must have forgotten. There was a terrible storm.' 'No storm where I was; see, here's the log-book. I wrote in it just before I turned in. I always do.' 'Fifteenth. Moon full, mate's watch on deck, fair breeze, making five knots.' 'I'll be going home now,' said Mrs. Captain. 'You're coming up to the house pretty soon. 'Avast there. What you scudding off in such style for? I'll be your convoy if you will

make fast till I can give my mate a few orders.' But the wife refused to wait, and hurried off without her convoy. The husband watched her almost running up the wharf, wondered what had got into Polly now, and said to himself, 'Hard craft to steer, those women folks;' and went to find his first mate, singing as he went—

"'If my dear wife should wish to gang,
To see a neebor or a friend,
A horse or chair I will provide,
And a servant to attend.
But if my dear shall hain* the charge,
As I expect she will,
And if she says, I'll walk on foot,
By my word, she'll hae her will.'

"Polly went home as fast as her feet would carry her. 'Charles, John, here, help me down with this kettle, and get it put away before the Captain comes.' She never swung in the brass kettle again."

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*Save.

By the time Miss Howard had finished her narration, Emily's tears were dried.

"Is that a true story, Aunt Maria?" asked Carl.

Though Miss Howard was not related to Mrs. Bartlett, her children had early learned to call their mother's friend "Aunt."

"I should not like to say that every circumstance happened as I have told it," said she, smiling; "but is not the story true to life? Do not all, young and old, swing in brass kettles?

Now Emily, and I do not mean to say that she is acting any worse or any differently than thousands of others have done, but thousands of others doing a certain thing, that does not make it right or wise,—Emily has imagined troubles for her parents and herself which will probably never befall them or her, and which she cannot prevent any more than that by walking on the glass. She has forgotten

that her father and mother are under the protection of Him who 'holds the waters in the hollow of His hand.' Instead of trying to do what she can to promote their happiness, she has been doing what she could to cause them discomfort. Carl, too, I am afraid it is not very different with him."

"I'm sure I don't see what I can do for them," said Carl, "they are way off on the ocean."

"I'm sure I can't do any thing for them now," said Emily.

"You can both do much. I must write to your mamma this evening; what shall I say? 'Carl and Emily think of nothing but their papa and mamma, and constantly grieve over their absence.'"

"Oh, no," said Carl; "don't write that."

"I don't want mamma to feel bad about me," said Emily.

"No, certainly you do not. I should like

to write something like this. 'Your son and daughter miss their father and mother much, but now that the first few days are over, I am very sure that they will study and play in good spirits, and that you may think of them as having bright faces and cheery voices.' May I write this with truth? It depends upon you."

Mrs. Randolph, who had come into the room while Miss Howard was telling her story, said, "When your Uncle Carl was a boy, he used to say sometimes, when he saw any one looking sad:

'For what can't be undone, boy,
He will not blubber on, boy;
He'll brightly smile,
Yet think the while
Of the friend that's gone, boy.'"

"Oh, I will try," said Emily. "I never thought I was giving mamma trouble; it doesn't seem as if I could, she's so far off."

"Can't you save some room for me to write a little?" asked Carl.

"Oh yes, I will do that."

Carl took his cap and went out. The letter was written and received. These were the closing lines:

DEAR MAMMA:

I did feel pretty bad after you went; but I don't feel so bad now. I have been over to Georgie Graham's playing ball, this afternoon, and I had a first rate time. Em is up-stairs now, with Grandma and Lulu, dressing dolls. Aunt Maria tells us jolly stories, most as good as Uncle Carl.

Your affectionate son,

CARL.

Our young friends were not perfect. Emily was sometimes indolent and careless, and Carl's hasty temper manifested itself more

than once in sharp words and even blows; but their love for father and mother was a powerful incentive and restraint. Miss Howard, from week to week, reported their honest efforts to please the absent ones, and they frequently received the expression of their parents's gratification on the same sheet with descriptions of wonderful people, places and things.

One day there came a letter with a Prussian stamp, and nearly covered with post-marks. It was directed to

MR. CARLETON R. BARTLETT,

BOSTON,

U. S A.

He knew the hand well. It was his mother's, and contained an account of a visit she had lately made to a school. The description was interesting, but the closing sentences of the letter was the best. Mrs.

Bartlett wrote, "We have missed none of your letters, not one. We do not always receive them regularly, but if we are without one week, we are pretty sure to be paid by finding two or three the next. You cannot think, Carl and Emily, how much pleasure it gives us to hear from you, that you are well and happy. If I supposed that my children were pining at home, that they could not be blithe and joyous because papa and mamma were away, I am afraid I should care little for the beautiful things I am seeing. I am afraid I should think only of my return to them. Kiss Emily and Lulu for me, dear Carl. Give love and hearty thanks to Grandmother and Aunt Maria, and believe me,

Your ever loving

MOTHER.

CHAPTER III.

MR. and Mrs. Bartlett left it to Miss Howard's decision where she should pass the summer vacation with Carl and Emily. She was desirous that their wishes should be gratified in the selection of a place, and one day, about the middle of June, said to them, "Vacation will commence in three weeks; where shall we spend it?"

"Oh, let's go to the —— House," said Emily, naming one of the large hotels near the White Mountains, where they had formerly been with their father and mother.

Carl spoke of a sea-shore resort where he had once staid for a month, but said his

father was there then, and he did not suppose there would be much fun without him.

"Where are you going, Grandmamma?" asked Emily.

"Cousin Amy wants Lulu and I should make her a visit."

"That's close by where your sister lives, ain't it, Aunt Maria?" asked Carl.

"About ten miles from Clifton, I think," replied Miss Howard.

The young people had often heard her speak of her pleasant visits to Clifton, of her nephews, and the orphan boy her friends there had adopted.

"Why couldn't we go to Clifton?" asked Emily; "then we could go and call on Grandmamma and Lulu."

"Lulu come and call on Emmy," said the child; "make calls like big ladies." She took a small book from the table, snatched Mrs. Randolph's handkerchief, ran to the door

and came back with a mincing step, holding the book with the handkerchief, as she had seen her mamma's friends hold their card-cases. "How d'ye do, Missie Wandolph?" "How d'ye do, my dear?" "How d'ye do, Auntie?" she said, as she walked round the room, offering her hand to one after another.

"I shouldn't wonder if Mr. Gray's place was very much like my Uncle Jacob's, where my mother used to take me when I was a little girl," said Mrs. Randolph, as soon as the laugh which followed Lulu's mimicry was over. "What wonderful times I did have, and what terrible destruction of clothing was the consequence. There was an immense brush-heap one side of the house. I used to think that some day that brush-heap would be burnt up, but the next summer it was just as large as ever. I suppose Uncle Jacob added to it every winter as much as was used. It was great sport for me to climb round on

it, but it was rending, heart-rending for pantaletts. It was the fashion then for girls of my age to wear pantaletts reaching to the ancle; some of mine were very handsome, with wrought edging and insertion. The ends in the brush-heap paid no respect to my embroidery, and one pair of pantaletts was ruined before mother knew it. I went into the house all tattered and torn. 'Hullo!' said Uncle Jacob, 'what did you travel so far through your pantaletts for?'"

"Oh, Grandmamma, it don't seem as if you could have ever been a little girl like Lulu, nor a big girl like me; it seems as if you were always a real nice old lady, the same as you are now," said Emily, throwing her arms about Mrs. Randolph's neck, and kissing her.

"I am afraid I was a sad tom-boy; but you must not be one," was the laughing reply.

"She'll do pretty well if she turns out like

Grandmother," said Carl. "Can't we go to Clifton, Aunt Maria?"

"I do not know. I had thought of it," said Miss Howard; "but perhaps we three would be a larger party than my sister could provide for."

"We won't be the least bit of trouble," said Emily.

"I will write to her. It may be she can arrange for us," said Miss Howard.

Emily waited for the reply with all the patience she could command. A week passed before it was received. Miss Howard slipped the blade of her penknife along one end of the envelope, drew out the well-covered sheet, and was soon absorbed in reading some items of Clifton news, entirely forgetting that young eyes were watching the expression of her face, and young ears were eagerly waiting to hear the decision.

"Oh — h dear," said Emily, after five

minutes had elapsed, "I do wish she'd tell us whether we're going or not."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Howard. "I was so occupied with the last part of the letter that I had almost forgotten that you had a share in the first part of it. I will read it."

Mrs. Gray wrote that she should be happy to see her sister and her young friends, if they thought they could be comfortable, in the rather crowded accommodations, which were the best she had to offer.

"I don't believe we shall be any more crowded than we were in the Clairevoie," said Emily. "They gave us rooms up in the attic; how I did hit my head against the slanting walls. Father said I would have been a treasure to a travelling phrenologist; I could show new bumps every day."

"We'll be comfortable enough," said Carl. "I'll carry up my tent and camp out. I'd like it number one."

"Oh, no," said Miss Howard, "we need not either camp out or make a new system of phrenology."

Glad to leave the heat, dust and close air of the city, Miss Howard, Carl and Emily started for Clifton the first day of July. Mrs. Randolph and Lulu were their travelling com panions for nearly the whole journey.

Though Carl and Emily had often spent a large portion of the summer at the sea-shore or among the mountains, they had never before been members of a farmer's household and enjoyed keenly the liberty, the freedom from conventional restraints.

Robin Gray gave Carl a boisterous welcome. He had found the boys of that scattered neighborhood poor substitutes for Frank, and hailed the arrival of one about his own age, who would be for two months his constant associate. Emily joined the boys in many a scheme, and was in great danger

of becoming, notwithstanding grandmamma's warning, a sad tom-boy.

One of their first exploits was swinging on birch trees. Robin had had much experience, and was in some respects a good teacher of the art. "I'll show you some splendid trees to swing on," said he.

"Have you got a swing out there?" asked Emily.

"No, we swing on the trees."

"Don't you want a rope?" said Carl.

"No, no, you come and I'll show you how. It's the greatest fun you ever had," said Robin, as he led the way to a clump of birch trees. He selected a tall, slender one, standing a little apart from the others, and began to climb.

"That won't bear," said Carl.

"Oh, never you fear," answered Robin, still ascending, swinging, swinging, till his feet nearly touched the grass; then he let go

his hold, and dropped lightly to the ground. "Ah, that's jolly," said he.

Carl and Emily had breathlessly watched him, expecting every moment to see the deli cate tree-top break and fall with its burden; but when they saw him safe on terra firma again, they entered more into the spirit of the sport. Carl, after two or three trials of smaller trees, found he could climb as high as Robin.

"Come, Em, you try it; it's grand. There's a tree just right for you."

Emily looked at the tree with longing eyes, wished girls could climb as well as boys, and would have tested her agility had not a gentle remonstrance prevented her. "Take care; that is one of the things girls ought not to do till they have had a good deal of experience."

"Then I don't see how they are going to do it at all," returned Emily.

"I don't either," said Deacon Goodwin, smiling.

"Oh, I see what you mean," said Emily, looking rather foolish.

"Didn't you use to climb birch trees when you was a boy, Uncle David?" asked Robin.

"And a good many other kinds of trees too. It will do pretty well for you boys; it don't harm you much to get a tumble once in a while. Your aunt Maria has come?"

"Yes, sir."

"Wonder if she and the young folks don't wan't to go with me to-morrow to salt my sheep?"

"I guess she'd like to. I'll ask her," said Robin.

"I can find room for you, too, but I didn't know as you'd care anything about it; it's nothing new to you."

"Oh, I couldn't go," said Robin, "I am going over to the Wrights to help them fix up their rabbit pen."

"I'll stop for you as I go along," said Deacon Goodwin, turning to Carl and Emily.

"Thank you, sir," said Carl. "We'd like to go very much, and I know Aunt Maria would."

"Salting sheep!" said Emily, as soon as the old gentleman was out of sight; "why don't he salt them at home? Is salt mutton good?"

"No, I guess not," replied Robin. "I never ate any; he didn't say anything about salting mutton, did he?"

"Why, yes, he said salting sheep."

"Well, that ain't salting mutton."

"What is the reason it ain't?" asked Carl

"You go with Uncle David, to-morrow, and you'll see."

The next morning, true to his promise, Uncle David, in his open wagon, stopped at Mr. Gray's door. He was one of the old people to whom all the inhabitants of Clif

ton claimed relationship. Nearly six feet in height, years had not bowed his well knit form. His few remaining locks were white as the driven snow; but his ruddy cheeks were almost as delicate as an infant's, and from those deep blue eyes, "those windows of the soul," looked out the sincerity and kindliness that dwelt within. Would that some skilful artist could have made permanent, on canvas, the form and features of that New England farmer as he sat waiting at Mr. Gray's door, on that bright July morning. Coarse in his dress, his manners had the polish which can be given only by constant thought of the comfort of others, constant forgetfulness of self. Old-fashioned, sometimes, in phrase and pronunciation, he was far from being an ignorant man. In the long winter evenings he had found time to store in his memory many historical facts; to enrich his mind with some of the choicest

thoughts of the older English divines, or to listen to the words of authors of the day, as they were read by one of the family. For thirty years he had been a deacon of Mr. Cummings' church. Those who shrank from entering the minister's study, often came to Uncle David's sitting room, or walked beside him in the field, between the rows, as they asked the counsel which might enable them to bear the burden laid upon them. Many a sorrowing one had taken up his cross again and borne it cheerfully, secure that the secrets he had confided to Uncle David were as safe as if locked in his own heart.

Deacon Goodwin's calm, happy expression would have led the careless observer to suppose that he had known little of the trials of life; but his way had been one in which feet less resolute than his would have faltered. When others would have been tempted to say, "My trouble is greater than I can

bear," he exclaimed, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." "He that made him" had indeed caused "his sword to approach unto him." Sons and daughters had been given him; but he and the wife of his youth were left to go down the hill of life with no son's strong arm to lean upon — ministered to by no daughter's faithful hand. The aged couple, though "ready to depart," still took a deep interest in the welfare of friends and neighbors, and were never more happy than when the voice of childhood or youth was heard in their dwelling.

But in our admiration for Uncle David, we must not longer keep him waiting. When Miss Howard came out, he was about to alight. "Do not get down, sir," said she. "Carl will help me."

"If you will excuse me, I won't," he replied. "I find I can't get out of a wagon as quick as I could twenty years ago."

The road for the first mile was smooth and level; the old horse jogged on at a moderate trot. The bracing air and clear sky were very exhilarating; and Emily, almost unconsciously, began to hum one of her school songs.

"Come," said Uncle David, "couldn't you sing so we can hear? don't keep all your music for your own benefit."

Emily sang; Miss Howard and Carl joined in.

"Away! away, we've a holiday,
And we'll off to the woods together,
And free as the robin that sings on the spray,
We'll bound o'er the bending heather.

Oh! tell us not of the town so gay,
Give us forests with trees and flowers,
Then off to the woods we'll away, we'll away,
So merry our holiday hours.

We'll watch the birds in the woody vale,
As from bough to bough they are springing
Our voices shall echo from hill and from dale,
And frighten the squirrels with singing."

Our readers are doubtless familiar with the song, and we omit the repeats.

"I like that," said Uncle David; "perhaps some day you'll come and sing it to my wife."

"Yes, sir, indeed we will." And they sang the holiday song again, testing the full strength of their lungs in the third verse.

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Deacon Goodwin, "if you haven't frightened the squirrels, you have the sheep."

A large flock of sheep, startled by the singing, were running across a rocky pasture.

"What is droller," said Miss Howard, "than to see a flock of sheep jump a wall; there they go, first one, then all the others follow."

The whole party laughed heartily as the wave of woolly backs rolled over the stone wall in one continuous stream.

"Now, let us sing, 'Up in the morning early,'" said Miss Howard.

One song after another was sung as the steady horse tugged up the steep hill, for when Deacon Goodwin turned off the main road, the ground was rising, and the wheels grated over large stones, or settled into and jerked out of holes, giving the occupants of the wagon now a lurch to the right, now to the left, then a bound from the seat, which made them catch their breath.

"I — wish," said Miss Howard, as she was recovering her own equipoise and that of her hat, which had brought up rather suddenly against Uncle David's broad shoulders, "I — wish — the town of Clifton would mend its ways."

"Begging your pardon," replied Deacon Goodwin, "these are not Clifton ways. It's good exercise. I thought I should be treating you city folks to a rarity."

After two miles ascending nearly all the way, the horse stopped of his own accord at a set of bars.

"Carl will take down the bars," said Miss Howard.

He jumped down, took out the rails, placed them against the wall, and sprang again to his seat. If the road had been rough, the pasture was rougher. Our friends jolted on till Uncle David said, "I reckon we will find sheep here; if we don't, we can walk the rest of the way."

He stopped in a hollow where the horse could stand comfortably.

"I don't see any sheep," said Emily, looking all around.

"Suppose you sit down here a minute or two," said Uncle David, pointing to an old log, "and we'll see if we can't hunt them up."

Miss Howard and Emily sat down, while Carl helped the old gentleman take from the wagon a small bag and a wooden measure. Some salt was poured into the measure, and Uncle David called, "Kerday, Kerday, Ker-

day." In an instant the hill-side was alive with staid old sheep, and scarcely less staid young lambs. They came over the crest of every hillock, hurrying towards their owner.

"Oh, do let me feed them," said Emily, running up to him.

"You may try," said he.

Emily took the measure, but every sheep and every lamb turned as if actuated by one will, and disappeared about as quick as they had come. Emily called, "Kerday, Kerday, Kerday," as Uncle David had done; she went up the hill in the direction in which some of them had gone, and called again; but the only effect of her call, was to make the few she caught sight of, to run farther from her, and she gave the measure to Uncle David. He called; the sheep appeared again, but did come near. "I believe you'll have to go and stand off a little way," said Uncle David.

Carl and Emily went and sat down beside

Miss Howard. Then the timid animals came bleating about the farmer, and ravenously ate the salt he scattered on the ground: some of them tried to put their noses into the measure. "Flora, Rose, Flossy," he called; and each one, knowing its name, came and ate from his hand. As long as Miss Howard, Carl and Emily remained quiet a few rods away, the sheep crowded about Uncle David; but the moment either approached, the frightened creatures scattered. Two or three times Emily tried to coax one of the little lambs to allow her to put her hand upon it; but the hand was that of a stranger, and the lamb fled from it.

As soon as the sheep were satisfied they were to be fed no more that day, they began to crop the short grass around the rocks, scattering here and there, and in a few moments only two or three were visible.

"It makes me think," said Carl, when they

were on the way home, "of that piece we speak at school sometimes; it's in the 'Lady of the Lake,' isn't it, Aunt Maria?" and he repeated the description of Rhoderic Dhu's signal to his concealed mountaineers.

"Yes," said Uncle David, "that is very fine indeed; but I can't say I like the idea of talking about 'plaided warriors armed for strife,' and our green hills at the same time. Can't you think of a description that suits my flock of sheep better? Think a moment: you have heard it a great many times."

"Oh, yes sir, I know," said Emily. "And the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."

"Yes, that is it," said Deacon Goodwin; "and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. I am the good shep-

herd and know my sheep, and am known of mine.' How has our Saviour made holy much of our plain, every day life. I never sow a field, care for my sheep, or gather a crop, but I praise Him for it."

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN our friends had been at Clifton four weeks, Frank Wellington came home to pass the August vacation.

"I haven't seen a blackberry this summer," said he, the next morning.

"Let's go and see if we can't find some," said Robin. "Frank will find them if they are to be found. I believe he knows every blackberry vine that grows."

"If you will bring me some," said Mrs. Gray, "I will make some blackberry shortcake and some pies."

"How I have wanted some of mother's pies, some that I wouldn't have to whittle

before I could get a piece to put in my mouth. Who joins the expedition?" said Frank.

"I—I—I," the three young people cried at once.

"There used to be some good places in the edge of 'Squire Williams' woods," said Frank.

They went and found the same spot where the two boys had picked many quarts the previous summer.

"They ain't so thick as they were last summer," said Robin, "let's go where they're thicker."

"We'll pick what there are here," said Frank; "if we spend all the time hunting round, we shan't have any to carry home to mother."

"There's no fun picking such little scat tering things," returned Robin.

"I think they're good," said Carl, speak ing with his mouth full.

They tramped about among the long, tangled vines; but the bottoms of the baskets were still visible, and Frank was tiring of his slow progress, when a loud voice startled him: "What yer pickin' them berries fur?"

"Don't they let you pick berries here, where you're a mind to?" said Carl, in an under tone, to Robin.

"Some folks don't like to have you," he answered, "but I never knew 'Squire Williams to make any fuss about it."

Frank rose from his stooping posture, turned and faced the new comer with a smile. "That you, Jotham?" I thought I knew the voice."

"Yes, that's me, 'taint no other feller, Jotham Hodgkins, present," returned 'Squire Williams' man, drawing himself up to his full height. "Don't yer fellers know no better'n ter pick them leetle misurbal things? What'd yer come eout fur?"

"To get some blackberries, I thought," said Frank.

"Wa-all, ef I was yer, I'd git 'em; them ain't blackberries, least ways I don't call 'em blackberries," replied Jotham, shortening his long nose till it was about half its usual length, and making amends to the nasal organ by thrusting out his lips.

"What a queer man," said Emily to her brother.

The grimace was greeted with a shout of laughter, and so acted upon Emily's sense of the ludicrous that it was half an hour before she completely recovered her gravity; every few moments the droll face of the man would come before her mind's eye and provoke merriment.

"Them's kinder like them things they hev down in Marschuset; they ain't nothin' but shoe pegs with a skin drawed over 'em; they stews 'em up sometimes deown ther, an' then they's more shoe peggy'n they was

afore. Better let ther birds heve them sorter things, they're jist 'beout right fur 'em; saves 'em ther trouble ev bitin' on 'em in two, they hain't got so big meouths as eourn," and Jotham looked at Carl, who had six or eight berries in the palm of his hand, and was throwing them into his wide open mouth all at once. "Come 'long uv a feller's kneow suthin', he'll show yer some blackberries as is blackberries."

"Come, all," called Frank.

Jotham strode through a corner of the woods, the underbrush crackling beneath his tread. The boys followed in single file, Frank holding back the branches for Emily. They came out on a field which looked as if soil and stones had had a fierce battle, and the stones had got the best of the struggle. In spaces, a few rods apart, the young brambly vines had sprung up and bore large berries in such profusion that the green leaves were almost hidden.

"Whew — w — w" whistled Carl, as the others, with many notes of admiration, began to seize the ripe fruit with both hands.

"It won't take long to get a basket full here," said Robin.

"Fact it won't," said Frank. "I never saw this place before, Jotham, and I thought I had scoured the country well for blackberries."

"Guess likely you didn't see this place afore, cause why, 'twan't here, yer see; ther 'Square an' I, we burnt it over year fore lass; I used ter wonder what on airth was ther good uv this ere place; 'tain't no use ter nobody; all stuns, an' rocks, an' scrawny bushes; an' neow, I kinder think 'twas good ter be burnt over an' bear tip-top blackberries. I wonder," said Jotham, apparently forgetting that any one was listening, "I wonder if there ain't some other miserable places an' folks in ther world that don't seem to be good for nothin', as kinder want to be burnt over,

or suthin' or 'norther, kinder want us folks as is good fur suthin,' ter do what we ken fur em, an' mebbe they'd be good fur suthin."

"Good in every thing; isn't there, Jotham?" said Frank.

"Wall, ya — as, I reckon so," he replied, "ony there ain't no good in my stanin' jabberin' here, when I orter be gitten' them berries Miss Williams wanted."

He went to a large clump of vines and commenced gathering the fruit. Carl had found in the midst of the same clump a great smooth stone where he could sit at his ease and pick into mouth or basket.

"Like blackberries, I reckon?" said Jotham.

"I guess I do."

"I reckon yer don't git sich blackberries as these be deown yer way, every day."

"Oh, we get pretty good ones," said Carl, unwilling to acknowledge the inferiority of home supplies.

"Git all kinder smashed up afore yer git 'em. I shouldn't want ter stay no time in Boston; there's some mighty mean folks deown there."

"I'd rather live there than any where else," said Carl, uncertain which was most incumbent on him, defence of his native city or civility to the man who had procured him such a feast.

"Some mighty mean folks," repeated Jotham, nodding his head.

"No meaner than you have got here, I'll warrant," retorted Carl, his face reddening to the roots of his hair.

"Wall, neow' I'll tell yer. When I was ter 'Square Martin's I went to Boston onct. Yer see ther was er man there, Badger his name was; he had some sheep as come in er vessel; they come frum, frum — wall, never mind, 'taint no odds where they come frum. He writ ter 'Square Martin as they wus come,

an' he was a wantin' on him ter hev some, they wus sich 'stonishin' critters, an' ef he'd send fur 'em quick he'd git two or three on 'em, but ef he wan't quick he'd lose 'em, 'cause there was sich er lot er fellers er scramblin' fur 'em, an' wantin' ter gin him whole fortins fur one on 'em; but seein' ther 'Square wus a old friend er hisen, he'd save three on 'em fur him, jist one week, an' he mought heve 'em at ther 'stonishin' low price uv five hundred dollars a critter. Wall, ther 'Square, he wouldn't hear nothin' but I must go jist as fast as I could trot, an' git them ere sheep. I tell'd him he'd better let t'other fellers heve 'em; they wus willin' ter pay sich fortins fur 'em, 'twas kinder tough on Badger ter take away sich a chance ter make money. 'Twan't no use; the 'Square he was a master feller fur buyin' critters as had heathen names to 'em, an' they want nigh so good nuther, half ther time, as ther regular Yankey land

o' freedom ones wus. Wall, I went 'long; he told me ter go straight ter Badger's store. The cars they come in ter that big stune depot, yer know, an' there wus an orful lot of fellers actin' like wild Injuns, hollerin' 'beout hackin' somebody. I jumped eout, an' one on 'em came an' stuck the butt eend uv his whip right in my face an' hollered. I didn't want ter be fightin' fust thing when I come ter Boston, but I wan't goin' ter stand no nonsense, no heow; so ses I, 'ef that's yer game, come on;' an' begun haulin' off my coat. The feller, he dropped his whip an' haw-hawed, an' another feller come up. 'Where do yer want ter go to?' ses he. 'I want ter go to Badger's store,' ses I, 'an' I'll be 'bleeged ter yer ef yer 'll tell me which way ter travel.' 'Jump in ter my kerridge,' ses he, 'an' I'll take yer there in no time.' 'I don't want ter take yer eout uv yer way,' ses I. 'Not 'tall,' says he, edgin' 'long to the

door, 'this way,' an' he opened the door of as nice a kerridge as yer'd want ter see. 'Jump in,' ses he. 'I jist as lief ride eoutside,' ses I. 'All right,' says he, 'jump in.' So I got in an' sot down, an' ther feller, he rid eoutside an' driv. ''Mazin' perlite yer are,' thinks I. Wall, he druv 'long by some wood piles, an' some smoky lookin' places, an' some places as looked like a berryin' ground all in a heap; they had lots of 'Sacred to the memory of,' least way I 'spose so, they looked master like tomb stunes; then the feller, he druv along where there wus some stores with caliker an' flannel flappin' reound; I begun to think he wa'n't never goin' to stop, so I stuck my head eout ther winder. 'Mister,' ses I, 'I'm 'bleeged ter yer fur ther ride, but ef it's all the same ter yer, I'd like ter be tuck straight ter Badger's store; but I den't b'leve he heard a word on it, ther teams made sich a racket. Bimeby he stopped. I tried to

git ther door open, but I couldn't do nothin' with ther plaguy thing; ther feller outside jumped deown an' whipped it open in er minute. 'Wall,' ses I, 'it's 'mazin' heow easy 'tis ter do a job when yer know heow. I'm 'bleeged ter yer, sir.' But ther feller, he looked kinder mad. 'Dollar,' ses he. 'Which on 'em is Badger's store?' ses I. 'Oh, it's one on 'em reound here,' says he; 'foller yer nose an' yer'll fine it. I want er doller fur yer fare.' 'I ain't a goin' ter give yer a doller,' ses I, 'didn't yer ask me ter ride?' Then there wus a feller in a blue coat, he come up. 'What's the matter?' ses he. 'Why,' says the feller that axed me ter ride, 'I brought ther member from ther rural district from ther depot an' he won't pay up.' 'Where wus yer goin?' ses ther 'tother feller. 'I want ter go ter Badger's store,' ses I. 'Where's that?' says he. 'I don't know,' ses I. 'I never was ter Boston afore. I-

should think yer fellers oughter know 'beout yer own teown; this chap said he knowd.' 'Wall,' ses he, 'give him fifty cents an' then I'll show yer Badger's store.' 'Wall,' ses I, 'seein' it's you I'll do it," an' I hauld eout half er doller an' gin the chap; he jumped on an' druv off like a streak. 'That's what I call mean,' ses I, 'ask a feller ter ride an' then holler fur er doller.' 'It's ther way he gets his livin,' ses he. 'What does Mr. Badger sell?' 'Cinnamon, an' pepper, an' them things, I guess,' ses I. 'Oh, yes,' ses he, 'Badger & Co., East Injy goods, this way.' 'No yer dont,' ses I, 'you'll be hollerin' fur a doller bimeby.' The feller he grinned. 'No,' ses he, 'I shan't charge yer nothin.' So we travelled on a leetle ways, an' he pinted deown ther street. 'There's ther place yer lookin' fur,' ses he. 'Mr. Badger a friend uv yourn?' 'No,' ses I, 'he ses he's a friend uv the 'Square's.' 'All right,' ses he, 'I hope

you'll find yer friend ter home.' Now don't yer think it's kinder mean to ax a feller ter ride, an' then holler fur a doller?"

"Why, that's the way they earn money," said Carl. "What did you get into his hack for, if you did not mean to pay him? Did you get your sheep?"

"Oh yes. I got the sheep. An' when I seed 'em, I didn't wonder ther feller wanted 'em sent fur in er hurry. I dew b'leve them poor critters 'd er been mutton; ther kinder mutton they call lanterns, too, I reckon, ef I hadn't er took 'em off his hand pretty tolerable quick. I tell yer, 'twent agin ther grain ter lay deown fifteen hundred dollars fur 'em, when I didn't know as they could say ba — a — a when I got 'em home. I axed Badger where the feller was as wanted ter give me a fortin for one on 'em, 'caurse,' ses I, 'I'll take ther 'sponsibility, like Gine'al Jackson did, yer know, uv swappin' one for a fortin on ther Square's 'ccount.'"

"What did he say to that?" asked Carl.

"Wall, he sed when he toll 'em they couldn't have none uv 'em, they was drefful disappint; but neow they'd gone an' buyed somewhares else. 'I hope they ain't got took in,' ses he. 'On the hule, I guess they hain't,' ses I. Wall, I got them sheep hum, an' I fussed over 'em, an' the 'Square he fussed over 'em; but t'want no sort er use on airth. Yer see, they was poor weakly critters ter begin with, an' ther vyge wus drefful hard fur 'em, an' they want use t' eour cold winters, an' we couldn't do nothin' with 'em; ef they'd er been Varmount sheep we'd er killed 'em long afore; but they cost five hundred dollers, an' they wus worth five hundred dollers, an' they must be took care on five hundred dollers. Wall, arter a while, I got kinder tired out, an' ses I ter ther 'Square, ses I, 'ef them ere sheep was mine, I'd make a present on 'em ter ther Agricultral S'city.'

I didn't mean no sich er thing, 'cause 'twant fair ter gin 'em ter nobody. But ther 'Square he was glad nuff ter get red er ther plaguy critters, an' bine bye ther papers said as how 'Square Martin had gin some very valerble, cuious sheep ter ther S'city, an' got er vote uv thanks fur 'em. That ere vote uv thanks wus ther mose he ever got fur them critters. They wus cuious sheep, though, very cuious sheep."

"The sheep man was mean," said Carl; "but all Boston people aint like him."

"Wall, mebbe not," returned Jotham.

How long the stream of his talk might have run on it is impossible to say. But if there was no limit to the endurance of his tongue, there was a limit to the capacity of the five quart pail he had been filling with blackberries.

"There, 'twon't holt er nuther one," said he. "I'm goin'; yer ken stay es long as yer mind ter."

'We have got our baskets about full too," said Frank. "Almost ready, Carl?"

"Ay, ay, sir."

The road home lay directly by Deacon Goodwin's door.

"I'll stop in at Uncle David's, and see if they don't want my berries," said Carl. "You've got enough for Mrs. Gray among you, haven't you?"

"Oh yes; more than she will want."

Carl went in at the open door, while the rest of the party waited at the threshold He gave his berries to Uncle David.

"Come in, all; no standing on the door-stone here. Wife, here is 'a nut-brown maid' and three 'Squires in waiting; they want a glass of your mead."

"We didn't say we wanted the mead," said Frank, coming in.

"You can't say you wouldn't like some," retorted Uncle David.

Robin whispered to Carl that Aunt Goodwin's mead was first rate.

"Now for some Adam's ale, out of the north-east corner of the well," said Deacon Goodwin.

"I will get it," said Frank.

He took the large stone pitcher, ran out to the well at the side of the house; the well-swoop creaked on its pivot, the iron-bound, iron-bailed bucket descended, came back and rested on the top of the square curb, overflowing with sparkling, pure, soft water, such as no pump, faucet, or other modern improvement yields.

"Ah," said Uncle David, as Frank placed the pitcher at his right hand, "there is nothing like an open well with an old-fashioned sweep ——"

"To make a poor old body's arms ache," his wife struck in.

The icy cold water was poured into the

mead already in the tumblers, the effer-verscing powder added, and the young people drained the foaming glasses.

"I declare, it does make a feller thirsty to go blackberrying," said Carl, setting down his tumbler.

"Do you like the mead?" asked Deacon Goodwin.

Carl uttered an inarticulate note of admiration.

"Have another glass," said Mrs. Goodwin.

Before he could refuse, the mead was boiling in his tumbler again, and he was advised to drink it before it had done foaming.

Robin and some of his schoolmates had, a short time before, formed a debating club, which held meetings and passed resolutions. On the way home he offered the following preamble and resolution, which were passed by an unanimous vote.

"Whereas, Uncle David is the jolliest old deacon we ever saw, therefore, Resolved, It is a pity there are not more like him."

CHAPTER V.

CARL, did you ever see two watch-dogs, each with a blanket given him to take care of, sit upon their blankets, and every now and then growl at one another, and show their teeth? Something of the same kind, on a large scale, is generally going on here on the continent of Europe. Several great mastiffs sit, each on his own blanket, eyeing all the others; every little while, one pounces on another's blanket, tears off a piece, and puts it on to his own. This they call revising their maps. Meanwhile, they are looking round and watching all the other dogs near. If they see one getting old, tired and sleepy, or sick, and losing his

teeth, so he cannot hold on to his blanket tightly, then the wide-awake dogs come each one to a corner of his own blanket. They put their heads together, and try to make a bargain to pull away the sick dog's blanket, and tear it up, so that every one can have a piece. This they call 'a Peace Conference.' But, luckily for the old toothless dog, they can seldom agree as to the part of his blanket one dog or the other is to have. They have not an atom of mother's faculty; we used to say that she knew how to cut a pie so that each one of us children had the largest piece. But every single dog wants the largest piece of the sick dog's blanket, and is determined that neither of the others shall have it. This they call, "maintaining the balance of power."

Now when the blankets are tearing, all the small dogs should be kept out of the way. The plain English of this long dog story is,

that the Emperor of France, the Emperor of Prussia, and the Emperor of Austria and two or three other men, who are said to wear bejewelled crowns, it is little they really wear them though, are preparing for war. Probably they will not go beyond preparation; but for fear they might, three American sovereigns who always wear crowns, the ones that nature gave them, lest they should be detained in some places longer than they wished, have made their progress more rapidly than they intended. This unexpected haste will cause the said sovereigns to return to their own dominions several weeks earlier than they proposed. They therefore send this missive to one of the princes to advise him that when it reaches him, the said three sovereigns will probably be crossing the territory of His Majesty, King Neptune.

Your mamma will write to Grandmamma the week before we sail, so that you may know just when to expect us.

By and with the advice and consent of the other two sovereigns, who send greetings,

CARLTON RANDOLPH.

So Mr. Randolph wrote to his nephew, under date August 10th. Three weeks later, on Tuesday morning, the letter reached the Gray homestead. Carl read it to Miss Howard and Emily. At first they could hardly believe that, under cover of talk about mastiffs, sovereigns, and so forth, Uncle Carl really sent the joyful news; that their dear friends were every hour, every moment nearing home.

"Uncle Carl don't mean they are coming now," said Emily.

"Of course he does," replied Carl.

"Oh dear," I'm afraid they will get there before we do; we shall not go till next Monday. Aunt Maria, do let us go right off; can't we go to-morrow?"

"I do not think we could start to-morrow,

but we might be ready the day after; that will be soon enough, I am quite sure. Suppose we ask Mr. Gray if he cannot let Frank drive us over to see your grandmamma this afternoon? She may have later news."

As this was somewhat like preparing for the reception of the expected ones, it gave a little relief to the impatient Emily; anything was better than sitting still and doing nothing. Mrs. Randolph had received no letter of more recent date; but coincided in the opinion that a speedy return to the city was advisable, and Thursday was agreed upon as the day for leaving.

"We want to be there in time to get settled, so that every thing will look as if we had not been away," said Mrs. Randolph.

"Only think," said Emily, "mother coming home next week. When she went away, I thought six months was an age; now it does not seem as if they had been gone more than six weeks."

"That is because you have been busy and interested in your every day work and amusements," said her grandmother.

"You concluded to be cheerful for the sake of helping your mother, and you have helped yourself."

"To-morrow we will pack our trunks, and Thursday we shall find you and Lulu in the cars," said Miss Howard.

The trunks were all ready, and Wednesday afternoon Carl went to bid Deacon and Mrs. Goodwin good bye. He stepped in without knocking, in obedience to Mrs. Goodwin's often repeated invitation, "Come right in, always; we are plain people, don't stop to knock." He crossed the kitchen and entered the sitting room. The whole aspect of the room was changed, and in how short a time! Yesterday he had been there in high spirits, and had shown his aged friends the foreign letter. They had entered into his pleasure almost as much as he had himself; smilingly

listened to his laudations of Uncle Carl, and his enumeration of gifts which he knew were on the way for him. Everything about the unpretending room looked bright then; now, though the furniture was the same, the curtains were drawn up, and the sunbeam lay across the braided carpet just where it did yesterday, yet all the cheeriness was gone. What did it mean? What did that room lack? Ah! it lacked what had always been its chief attraction; that which had made its homely appointments shine with a brilliance gilding and mirrors can never give. It lacked the light upon the faces of its occupants. Mr. Gray was there. He had stopped on his way from the Post Office; there he had learned that the weekly papers he had received contained sad, unaccountable intelligence for the venerable couple, and he had come to offer his sympathy and aid. He stood with the paper in his hand. Uncle

David sat in his large, high-backed rocking-chair, gazing at the neighbor, utter surprise and bewilderment written on his face. Mrs. Goodwin sat beside her husband, her hands clasped tightly around his right arm.

"I—I don't understand," said the old gentleman, "won't you just read that again?" Then, seeing Carl, he mechanically extended his left hand, which the boy grasped as he stood listening to Mr. Gray.

"MORTGAGEE'S SALE."

"Will be sold at public auction, Wednesday, the fifteenth day of September, all the right, title and interest said mortgagee has in the estate in the town of Clifton, now occupied by David Goodwin;" then followed a description of the house, land, boundaries, etc., and the advertisement concluded with the words, "Sale positive, subject to the mortgagor's equity of redemption.

J. J. DOWNING, Mortgagee."

"I don't understand," repeated Uncle David, "there is no mortgage on my farm. I did mortgage it to Mr. Downing for two thousand dollars; but I paid the money, every dollar of it, two years ago."

"You got the money of 'Squire Williams, didn't you?" asked Mr. Gray.

"Yes, and I offered to transfer the mortgage to him, but he wouldn't take it; he said my note was enough."

"Yes, I remember," said Mr. Gray. "I was there at the time."

"Downing talked pretty hard," said Deacon Goodwin, "and threatened, once or twice, to take possession; the 'Squire heard him, and told me I had better take the money of him, and get rid of Downing altogether. He said I could pay him a little at a time, as it was convenient."

"Why," continued Deacon Goodwin, after a short pause, "my father built this house,

the most part of it; he used to sit in this chair; he brought his wife here when they were married. My mother used to wind up that clock every week;" he pointed to the tall, old-fashioned clock, ticking in the corner. "I was born here, my father and mother drew their last breath here, and were buried from here. I brought my wife here, a bride. Here we reared our children. In this room two have died in my arms. We have been young here, we have grown old here, Lucy and I; we cannot go from here. You might as well try to move one of those old elms out there, that my father planted when he was a boy."

"You must not go from here," said Mr. Gray; "you have the papers? We will go to Mr. Murdock's to-morrow and make it all straight. Downing ought to suffer for this; it is a piece of small, mean spite. You were on the School Committee when his boy was turned out of school."

"Yes, so I was. I don't want him to suffer, though."

"You have the papers?" Mr. Gray asked again.

"Yes — no — Mr. Murdock has them. Let me see, how was it? This comes so sudden I can't think."

"Don't you remember," said Mrs. Goodwin, "you sent Josiah — ?"

"Yes, yes — that is it. Josiah took the money to Mr. Downing, and then he left the papers with Mr. Murdock to put on record."

"To have the discharge recorded," said Mr. Gray. "Then Josiah paid the note. How long before he left?"

"How long was it, wife? I can't think."

"It was two days."

Carl had been watching Mr. Gray's face, and saw a change come quickly over it when Josiah was mentioned.

"Well," said the neighbor, "I don't see

but we must go to Shiretown to-morrow and see Mr. Murdock; he can make it all right, I hope," he added, in an under tone.

"I wish you would let me go with you," said Carl.

Uncle David turned to him, and, for the first time since he had come on, appeared like the Uncle David the boy had seen every day for the last six weeks. "No, my boy, we old folks must not lay the burden of our troubles on young shoulders."

Carl gave Mr. Gray an appealing look. "If you don't object, Uncle David," said he, "Carl really wants to go."

"Just as you say," was the reply.

"What business has that man to sell Uncle David's house if he don't owe him anything?" asked Carl, as he and Mr. Gray were going out of the gate.

"That is the trouble. I am afraid he does owe him."

"Why, he says he has paid him."

"Yes, but he sent the money by Josiah."

"Who is Josiah?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know anything about Josiah. He is Uncle David's youngest son, the only child he has living. He got among a wild set at Parker's Mills, and all of a sudden he went away, nobody knows where or why; now I don't know but this advertisement explains it."

"He wouldn't take the money," said Carl.

"I shouldn't think he could," replied Mr. Gray. "There wasn't a finer boy in town, two years ago; but he took to drink, and then he run down fast enough. I didn't know but it would kill his father and mother, at first; but I suppose they think he will come back, and besides, their religion has carried them through a good deal of trouble."

"I don't believe Josiah took the money," said Carl.

"Well, we may find out something to-morrow, but I hardly think Downing would dare put such an advertisement in the paper if he had no right to. It is bad enough if Uncle David owes him; in that case, it may be law, but it is not honor, or justice, or decency."

"There," exclaimed Carl, "I never thought, we are going home to-morrow. What shall I do? I don't want to go and not know how Uncle David gets along."

"I didn't think of that," said Mr. Gray; "perhaps Aunt Maria will stay another day."

Miss Howard did not wish to break her engagement with Mrs. Randolph, and decided that she must carry out her plan, but yielded to Carl's earnest solicitation to grant him permission to remain and return alone on Friday.

He went with Deacon Goodwin and Mr. Gray to Shiretown. Their first call was at the register's office. The mortgage deed was

recorded, but there was no record of the discharge. Next they went to Mr. Murdock's office. He was a young man who had a few years before succeeded to his father's business, but not to his warm, personal friendship with many of the older men of the neighboring towns. The lawyer was very sure that no such papers had been left with him. He was very particular about all real estate transactions, all transactions in fact, and no such document could have escaped his notice, his personal attention. Mr. Gray ventured to ask whether they might not have been left in Mr. Murdock's absence. "Then my clerk would have called my attention to them," was the decided answer, and the lawyer took up his pen with an air of offended dignity.

But one gleam of hope remained; it was just possible that some explanation might be extracted from Mr. Downing. The chance was so small, however, that Mr. Gray tried to

induce Deacon Goodwin to wait the result of the inquiry at the house of an acquaintance. The kind-hearted man dreaded, for his old friend, the exultation which he knew that Mr. Downing would not conceal. But Deacon Goodwin would listen to no such suggestion, and they alighted to a large store. Three names were on the sign over the door, Downing being the third. When they went in, Mr. Downing was standing behind the counter near the door. He glanced at the party without the least sign of recognition, walked deliberately to the rear of the long store and commenced a conversation with a customer, a clerk was waiting on. Mr. Gray found a chair for Deacon Goodwin apart from buyers and sellers, then followed Mr. Downing, and accosted him, "Deacon Goodwin wishes to speak with you." The shopkeeper honored the visitor with a prolonged stare and said, "Oh, it is Mr. Gray, I shall be at liberty

soon," turned to the customer and went on descanting on the relative merits of certain brands of flour. Mr. Gray, with difficulty, kept in check his rising anger, when he remembered how often he had entered Mr. Downing's store in Clifton, and been received by its smirking master, in expression and deportment, the most obedient, most humble servant. The farmer stood a few moments waiting the pleasure of the insolent trader, and then said again in a louder voice, "Deacon Goodwin wishes to speak to you, Mr. Downing."

"Don't keep that old gentleman waiting on my account," said the customer, "you can give me your opinion of the flour another time just as well."

"Oh, certainly sir," replied Mr. Downing, "only I wanted you to be sure and have the best. Sell a man the best and he'll come again. That is my motto." Without a word

to Mr. Gray, he turned on his heel and approached Deacon Goodwin.

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"I see you have advertised my place for sale."

"Well, what if I have," Mr. Downing interrupted. "Didn't I tell you I should have to sell if you didn't pay up. Man alive, I've got a family to support. I can't afford to throw away my money. I can't afford to let my capital lay idle. I can find a use for every dollar of my money."

"I owe you nothing, Mr. Downing," said Deacon Goodwin.

"Well, I declare. That *is* cool. Here you are, a sanctimonious deacon, come and borrow a man's hard earnings, a man that's got a wife and children depending on him, and that don't pretend to be any better than his neighbors; and then, when he wants what belongs to him, you say you don't owe him any thing.

You'd better try that on somebody else; 'twon't do for me."

"Mr. Downing," Mr. Gray interposed, "respect Deacon Goodwin's gray hairs, if you have no respect for the character that every one else reverences."

"Don't make any difference to me whether a man's hair is red, white, or gray," retorted Mr. Downing. "Right's right; and I've a right to what's my own, and I mean to have it."

"More than two years ago, my son Josiah paid the debt I owed you," said Deacon Goodwin, speaking in cool clear tones.

"Your son Josiah! How comes it then that I have the note? If your son Josiah paid me that two thousand dollars, all I've got to say is, let him come and tell me when and where he did it."

"You have the note you say, Mr. Downing," said Mr. Gray. "Deacon Goodwin would like to see it."

"You make yourself very busy in other people's affairs. I don't know as I'm under any obligation to hunt over my papers for your amusement."

"The note is one evidence of the debt," said Deacon Goodwin, with dignity, "and I should like to see it."

Mr. Downing wheeled round, went to a small room in the back of the store, very deliberately selected the note from a bundle of papers he took from his private drawer in the safe, returned, and held the note with both hands before Deacon Goodwin's face. The aged man recognized the paper at once, and said, as if speaking to himself, "Oh, why did Josiah go away?"

"Yes, sure enough," sneered Downing, "why *did* Josiah go away?"

"No more of that," said Mr. Gray, grasping the shop-keeper's shoulder.

"You needn't think you can frighten me

out of my rights," said Mr. Downing, turning pale.

"I didn't come here to quarrel with you," said Mr. Gray, releasing his hold as the man stooped and slipped from under his hand.

"Then we understand that you intend to go on with this sale," said Mr. Gray.

"Certainly I do. I don't put advertise ments in the paper for child's play."

Carl lingered behind the two men as they turned towards the door. He looked at Mr. Downing standing with his hands in his pockets, and a gloating, triumphant smile on his face. "I wish I was a man."

"You do, do you?"

"Yes, I do; then you should not take Uncle David's place away from him."

"What could you do about it, young man?"

Sick at heart Mr. Gray followed his old friend from the store. The younger man did

not wish to intrude advice upon the elder, and would not have known what counsel to give, had any been asked. He could only hope that Uncle David's faith would again guide him through deep waters, and secretly prayed that he might be saved from the threatened calamity.

When they drove up to the door, Mrs. Goodwin's anxious face appeared at the window, but she did not come to ask the result of their investigations. No need of that: it was written on the bearing of each.

"If you can come in I should like to have you," said Uncle David, as he leaned on his neighbor's shoulder in getting out of the wagon.

Carl looked at Mr. Gray for directions. "You may drive right home, or come in, just as you please," said he, in an under tone. The boy followed into the house. Mrs. Goodwin took her husband's hat from

him as he sank into the old rocking-chair, laid it aside, and sat down by him.

"Well, wife, we haven't brought you much comfort. We may have to leave this place, but we will not, till we are obliged to: before God, I believe it belongs to us, but we cannot resist the action of the law. What weighs upon me most is my debt to 'Square Williams. Our Father will soon take us to the better country; we must set our house in order; we must owe no man anything if we are driven from here. I see but one way of doing what is honest in the sight of all men. My poor Lucy, the good gift God has spared to me so many years; our pilgrimage here is nearly ended, the shining ones are waiting for us on the other side of the river; the dark valley may be brighter if we do not go to it from this earthly home. Heaven's eternal door is just as wide open for those who are destitute of earthly possessions, as for the rich

who find it hard to enter. The mansions will be ready for us whether we fall asleep under our own roof or under that which shelters the town's poor. 'Troubles past make heaven brighter and its joys more sweet.'"

The wife made no reply, but sat with her eyes fixed on her husband's face, her hands clasping his arm. He paused a moment, then continued: "I never thought it would come to this, wife; but there is no disgrace in it. I see now that it was wrong for me to borrow the money, but I wanted to help our boy, our Samuel. I thought I could pay it if he didn't; this would not have happened if he had lived. But we did what we thought was best at the time. We have done no wrong. Wife, poverty is a disgrace when it is the fruit of wrong doing. My poor wife," said Uncle David, gently stroking the gray hair which the white lace cap did not cover.

"Don't, David; don't call me your *poor*

wife. I can bear it very well, but it is hard, cruel of my Great Heart."

Mr. Gray and Carl had been silent witnesses of this scene. Mr. Gray felt that no word of his ought to be interposed between those of husband and wife, but he could refrain no longer.

"No, Uncle David, Clifton will never see you in the poor-house. It wouldn't really be any disgrace to you, but it would be to a good many others Just think how many of us Clifton folks you have helped when we have been in need of one sort and another. How long you have been an honor to the church here. No, no; we must find some way to get the money together; but if worst comes to worst, and Downing does sell this house over your head, my doors are open to you, and I know a hundred others will be."

"Yes, I've no doubt you'd all be ready to do all you could to help me, but I could not

think it right to run in debt when I've no prospect of paying. We thank you, Mr. Gray, my wife and I; you wouldn't mean we should ever feel beholden to you, but it is hard for an old man who has always lived on his own land to be dependent. If we go from here, there will be something coming to me after Mr. Downing's claim is satisfied. We will sell the house, the cows, every thing if we must, and pay 'Squire Williams. I should like to save some of those things that were my fathers and my mothers, but they wouldn't belong to me if I was in debt."

Mr. Gray saw that it was useless to argue the matter and said, "Don't fail to call upon me if I can be of the least service to you." Uncle David promised.

Carl must now say good bye, a heavy task for him. He went up to Deacon Goodwin and offered his hand, saying, "I've got to go home to-morrow. I wish I hadn't. I wish I could do something for you."

"I don't see that you can, my son," was the old man's reply. "Don't be unhappy about us; remember, 'our help cometh from the Lord;'" and he kissed the boy's smooth cheek. Mrs. Goodwin also kissed him, and gave him a kind message to Emily, who had made her adieux the day before.

Carl sat in the cars the next day completely absorbed in thought. The near prospect of his parent's return did not divert his mind from Uncle David's trouble; his heart was full of sympathy, and his whole soul filled with the desire to avert the impending blow. But what could he do? He, a mere boy, dependent for food and raiment, with not a dime he could call his own, but the moderate allowance of pocket money his father supplied every month, and permitted him to spend as he pleased; what was that when thousands were talked of? "What can I do? What can I do?" he said again and again. The

question repeated and re-repeated, recalled, by an association of ideas not clear to his mind, the conversation with Miss Howard the week after his mother's departure. "Aunt Maria said," thought he, "that I would do something to help mamma while she was way off on the ocean, and mamma herself says she has a great deal better time because she knows we don't fret about her. Now doesn't it look as if I might do something for Uncle David. How kind he has been to us? Uncle Carl, too; he said we could help mamma." Uncle Carl! Ah, there was a gleam there Uncle Carl was a lawyer; he had often heard his father say that he hardly ever lost a case. But would he be at home before the time Mr. Downing had set for the sale. Well, if he was not, he would understand all about it: he would manage it some way. The more he thought, the more sanguine he was that through Mr. Randolph would come the deliverance for Deacon Goodwin.

CHAPTER VI.

THE weight off his mind, Carl could think of the pleasure in store, and, the journey ended, bounded up the steps of his own home ready to join heart and hand in the preparations going on for the reception of the travellers. His first question was, "Has grandmamma had another letter?" Yes, it had come that morning. The day for sailing was the fourth of September. "They won't get here till Uncle David's place is sold," he thought, "but no matter; Uncle Carl will make it all right."

The rooms were arranged, flowers were ordered, and all things were in readiness.

Carl went one afternoon to the reading-room, where he had often been before with his father, and learned that the steamer had arrived in New York. "They will take the night train and be here in the morning; we must all be up with the lark," said Mrs. Randolph.

Soon after daylight the next morning, a rail-road coach, filled with passengers and loaded with baggage, rumbled along the street and stopped at the door. "Oh! there's mamma," cried Emily, as she almost fell down the front steps, forgetful of her hasty toilet, quite unconscious of the smiles of the passengers, and utterly oblivious of the fact that she was standing directly before her mother and effectually barring her way to the door. Carl was here, there, every where, speaking now to his father, now to his uncle, and trying to crowd a word on his mother's attention, which his sister appeared deter-

mined to monopolize. "Let us adjourn to the house," said Mr. Randolph, taking Emily by both arms, and lifting her up to the door. Mrs. Bartlett and Carl followed; then the driver could bring in the trunks; there were two large ones which had not the old, familiar travel-worn, battered air of the three which left home in the spring.

There was so much to tell, and so much to hear, that it was not till night when Carl was in his own room, an hour later than his usual bedtime, that he recollected that the time set for the sale of Deacon Goodwin's place had passed. His last thought before falling asleep was of the appeal he intended to make to his Uncle Carl at the earliest possible moment in the morning. Mr. Randolph did not come down stairs till after the family were seated at the breakfast table, and at once began an amusing description of the perplexities of a compatriot whom he had encountered at dif

ferent hotels, and who had all the French he was owner of between the covers of a stout dictionary and a slender phrase book. Peal after peal of laughter interrupted the account of Jonathan's efforts "parler Francaise," and Mr. Bartlett was at last obliged to beg the postponement of the ludicrous reminiscences, lest he should be compelled to go breakfastless to his business.

Carl took advantage of the lull in the conversation, and said, "Uncle Carl, can't you get Uncle David's place back for him?"

"Uncle David? that's a new relative; sprung up lately, has he? I never heard of him before, but perhaps he is your relative and not mine."

"He's everybody's relation," said Emily, "and the grandest old man you ever saw. He's splendid."

"Splendid, is he?" asked Mr. Randolph, raising his eyebrows. "How comes it that

this splendid old gentleman has lost his splendid place?"

"Oh, it isn't a splendid place at all. He borrowed some money——," the story of Deacon Goodwin's embarrassment was told as intelligibly as Carl could do it.

Mr. Randolph, accustomed to hear and weigh evidence, and lacking the medium of affectionate interest which influenced the boy's vision, saw at once the obstacles in the way of a satisfactory settlement.

"I don't see much chance for your Uncle David," said he.

"Oh, do, do something, do try," besought Carl. "Papa said you was the best lawyer he knew of."

"It don't make much difference whether a lawyer is good or bad; if he has nothing to rest his case upon, he is pretty sure to be beaten. Look out of the window there, Carl; see those men trying to move those heavy

stones for the new house. I've been watching them several minutes, and wondering why they do not get something to rest their iron bars upon. There comes the master workman; he has got a solid piece of timber; he is putting it close to the stone, now the men can pry. See, over goes the stone. Give me something to pry against, and I am not afraid to stand beside any man in the profession. But just look at your friend's case, Carl. Here is an old gentleman borrows money from this Mr. Downing and gives him a mortgage on his farm for security. So far they both agree. The creditor demands payment. The debtor obtains the amount of a friend. The evidence of that is quite clear; but instead of paying over the money himself and securing the discharge, he trusts the money to a young man whose reputation is far from good, directs him to pay the note and deposit the proof with the

old gentleman's man of business. The young man returns, reports that he has executed his commission, but a few days after disappears, and has not been heard from since. The man of business has never seen the papers; they are in the hands of the creditor who asserts that he never received the payment. Cannot you see the case has not a leg to stand upon? The lawyer who should take up such a case would be a laughing stock."

Stated in this terse, relentless manner, Carl could not but acknowledge that there was little for Uncle David to rest his claim upon; that Mr. Randolph was indeed right. What a sad downfall to his hopes. He had been so sure that his uncle, with all his legal skill, would find some way of clearing up his old friend's difficulties; and now to have that skill only used to make them stand out in a stronger light! He sat a few moments in

silent thought: he could not give up without one more effort.

"May be I have not told you everything, Uncle Carl. May be I don't understand all about it. Uncle David said he knew the place was his, and after we went to see Mr. Downing, Mr. Gray said he was almost certain the man was telling lies about it."

"Yes, but my dear boy! that is not evi dence. You and I may be certain of a thing in our own minds, and yet not be able to persuade others to believe it. We must have a very clear case before we can induce judges or juries to go behind the records, in real estate transactions. If it were not so, we should never any of us know whether we were to have a roof to sleep under. I am sorry I can do nothing to help your old friend, who has been so kind to you."

"You can't think how good he was," said Emily; and the brother and sister vied with

each other in setting forth the virtues of Deacon Goodwin, until father and mother and uncle felt that they too were acquainted with the "splendid old man."

"It *is* a pity, a sad pity," said Mrs. Randolph, "that he should suffer so for the misdeeds of his son."

"A cruel piece of wicked selfishness on his part," said Mr. Randolph.

"I don't believe Josiah took the money," said Carl. "He would not cheat his own father that way."

"I am not so sure of that," said Mr. Randolph. "There is a stage in life which some young people pass through, a stage which I hope and believe my nephew and niece will serve as they sometimes do the prosy pages in a story book, skip it. I have heard it called 'the ungrateful age.' When it is reached, the youth feels his own importance in the world, and does not find others as

ready to acknowledge it as he wishes, or as perhaps they should be. Confident of his own abilities, and of the correctness of his own opinions, impatient of parental guidance, the experience of others is to him, only the stone in the other end of the bag; he knows a far better way of carrying *his* corn to mill. When a boy is in this irritable, self-sufficient state of mind, then designing people find him open to their advances: wicked associates draw him into bad habits, or those old in sin mould him in accordance with their own plans. Many a poor fellow has been thus led to commit deeds which have given him food for bitter reflection all the remainder of his life; deeds the thought of which he would have scouted in calmer days, saying, 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?' Now it appears to me this might have been just this young man's case; well-intentioned in the main, it may be, he has

allowed himself to be led away, and had not the courage to face the consequences of his error, but left the aged father and mother to bear them as best they might."

"Then you won't try to help Uncle David," said Carl.

"What *can* I do?"

The boy left the room without saying another word; his sister followed him to the library, where they talked over their hopes and their disappointments.

"I have a plan in my mind," said Mrs. Bartlett, as soon as the young people were gone.

"Let us hear it," said her brother.

"We have had a delightful tour; we have been delivered in times of peril, and we have come back to find our loved ones in health and our home all sunshine. 'From the ground of my heart' I am thankful; so I know both of you are. I think the best way

to give thanks is to do something to make others happy. Now let us bring our thank-offerings, and see if we cannot drive away the cloud that has settled over that old couple. Arthur and I will furnish the means. Carl, my brother, you must do the business. Am I right, Arthur?"

"My wife is always right," replied Mr. Bartlett. "Draw upon me for the amount, Carl."

"I think I will draw upon your humble servant for a part," returned Mr. Randolph. "I ought to have thought of this before. I hope Deacon Goodwin will not refuse the gift."

"Oh, you can manage that. I don't fear," said Mrs. Bartlett.

"I will try. At any rate I believe in despatching business. A hundred or two miles is not much after the thousands we have walked, sailed and rode over."

Mr. Randolph was missing from the dinner table.

"Where is Uncle Carl?" Emily asked.

"He had business that called him away," her mother replied. "He thought he should be back in a day or two."

"It's too bad for him to go off again just as he has got home; we wanted to see him a little while."

"So it is," chimed in Carl.

"And it's real mean of him not to help Uncle David."

"So it is," Carl again asserted. "I don't believe but what he could if he had a mind to."

"Come, come, my son," Mr. Bartlett remonstrated.

"Well, I don't care. He's always telling us to do all we can to help other people; we mustn't say, can't; there's nothing like, 'I'll try,' and all that sort of thing."

"That is right; that is good advice. Isn't it?" asked the father.

"I don't see why it ain't good advice for him, if it is for me. Grown-up folks are always advising us; why can't they take some of it to themselves? It makes me think of what Aunt Maria was reading last Sunday. The man said that a good many people thought that all the bad things the Bible said were going to happen, were going to happen to the Jews; and all the good things it told about were going to happen to the Christians. There's lots of grown-up folks that seem to think all the must, and ought and try, are for us boys and girls; and all the 'do as you're amind to' belongs to them."

"Did you ever see any boy or girl who wants more than his or her share of the do as you're mind to? It seems to me I have a dim recollection of something of the kind. We will excuse you from talking any more in

that way of your uncle, for some time you may be ashamed of it."

Carl, checked by his father's reproof, swallowed his dinner in silence, all the while nursing his disappointment and vexation. While he was uttering his complaints, Mr. Randolph was in the lower cloud region, not in reverie, and borne on the curling fumes of a noxious weed, but in actual fact, in a railroad car, drawn by a locomotive, which puffed and panted up the steep grades of the Green Mountains, till the ponderous thing was on a level with the fleecy clouds themselves. It was vapor raging and struggling to be free, that brought the monster and its burden there; it was vapor free, that floated beauteous in form and motion about it. Mr. Randolph gathered from chance passengers much of the information we will now give our readers.

CHAPTER VII.

THE fifteenth day of September was fair. Every man in Clifton who could possibly be present at the sale was there, and quite a number came from the neighboring towns. Deacon and Mrs. Goodwin sat in their accustomed places in "the living room;" neighbors and friends had followed Mr. Gray's example, and thrown open their doors, had begged them to accept hospitality, if only for that day, well knowing that many things would be said and done which could not fail to wound the feelings of the venerable couple. But Deacon Goodwin had steadily refused all such invitations,

reiterating his determination to remain in possession of his rightful property, until compelled to give it up.

A few of those who were on most intimate terms with them, came, shook hands with the old people, uttered a few sympathizing words, and went out. Not one of the inhabitants of Clifton, to their honor be it said, had a thought of examining the premises with a view to purchase. Mr. Downing officiously conducted strangers over the house and farm, enlarging upon the merits, regardless of the question, whether his loudly expressed commendations reached the ears of the occupants or not.

Jotham Hodgkins moved about in the crowd, eyeing and dogging the steps of any stranger who seemed bent on investigations. Mr. Downing came out of the barn with two men, and the three passed directly into the house. Jotham stood talking with Mr.

Wright. "Guess I'll jest go an' look arter them chaps," said 'Squire Williams' man. "When I see that ere Downin' reound ther Deacon, I can't think er nothin' but one uv them ere miserble flies as gits inter er horse's ears an' draws ther blood; seems es tho' I ought ter drive him off."

Mr. Downing and the strangers were leaving the sitting room just as Jotham entered it; their footsteps were soon heard above in the attic, where were deposited many relics of by-gone days.

"They're jest like them ere frogs yer read on in the Bible," said Jotham; "they come inter ther house, an' inter ther bed chamber, an' inter ther beds, an' inter ther oven, an' inter ther kneadin' troughs; but them ain't no sich 'spectuble critters as frogs, them's toads, misuble toads. There, they're up garret neow; guess I'd better go an' pitch 'em eout ther winder."

"No, no, Jotham," said Deacon Goodwin, "they won't be here long."

Jotham waited in the house until he was sure that Mr. Downing had left it; then he went out into the yard and found that the auctioneer had arrived; he was standing, looking round on the assembled crowd. Jotham elbowed his way up to him, and asked, "Yer ther feller that's come ter auction this ere farm?"

"That is my business here," was the reply.

"Wall, sposin' yer jest look er here er minit;" and Jotham led the man to a spot where he could, without being himself seen, have a full view of Deacon Goodwin and his wife. "There, them's ther old folks yer goin' ter turn eout er door; he never lived nowheres else, an' his father lived here afore him. There ain't no better, piouser folks in *this* teown than them ere ole folks, and them's ther folks yer goin' ter send ter ther poor

house; neow, don't yer feel 'shamed er yer-self? Don't yer think yer in kinder mean bizness?"

The auctioneer fixed his bright eyes, for a moment, on the face of his interlocutor, and, realizing that his indignation was caused by his warm interest in the venerable deacon and his wife, frankly answered, "Yes, I do. I knew nothing about the owner of the property before I came here this afternoon."

"Give us yer fist," said Jotham, extending his brawny hand; "yer a cleverer feller than I took yer fer. Most time, ain't it?"

"Wants only three minutes," said the auctioneer, taking out his watch with his left hand, while Jotham shook his right.

"Wall, I'd like to orate jest a leetle; yer won't be in no great hurry ter begin fur five minutes or so, I 'spose?"

"We cannot delay long.

"Wall, then, here goes."

Jotham vaulted to the top of the fence, and holding on by one arm to the gate-post, had the other free for gesticulation. He commenced speaking in a loud voice. The scattered groups collected about him and formed a solid human barrier. Mr. Downing and the two men who had been examining the house and grounds were left on the outside of the crowd

"I ain't much used ter oratin," said Jotham, "but I ken tell folks what I know; neow I know this ere farm's er putty good farm. I dunno' as some farms ain't better farms, but this ere farm's putty good; it's got upland an' medder, an' wood lot, jest 'beout right. I've lived in Clifton three, four year, an' I kinder feel's though I was Clifton folks long on ther rest on 'em, an' they knows Uncle David putty well, an' Clifton folks, they don't none on 'em want ter be tolt nothin' 'beaut this ere farm, ner 'beaut what sort uv

er time the chap'll heve es buys it. We've got er plenty uv rale good fences reound here, but we ain't goin' ter pull none on 'em ter pieces jest ter git a rail ter give ther chap es lives in Uncle David's house er ride. There's tar 'nuff reound somewheres, an' ther ain't none uv these houses reound here es ain't got rale good pillers in 'em stuffed with rale live goose feathers; neow we ain't goin' ter waste none uv that ere tar, ner rip up none uv them ere pillers ter give that chap er suit er close. That ere chap'll have er plenty er room in his house, 'cause there won't no Clifton folks never trouble him comin' inter it; they won't want ter sell him nothin'; they won't want ter buy nothin' on him; he'll heve jest as good er time in this ere teown es ther feller thought he should heve ef he could ony keep tavern arter all ther rest uv ther folks was dead."

"Isn't it time to commence this sale, Mr. Auctioneer?" shouted Mr. Downing.

The auctioneer, who was standing with his back to Jotham, turned round, closed the memorandum-book he had been writing in, looked at his watch, very deliberately returned it to his pocket, and answered, "Quite time," and began.

"What am I offered for this parcel of real estate; what am I offered; give me a bid, gentlemen, just start it, gentlemen; any thing you say, gentlemen, only give me a bid."

Not a person answered. If any had come with the intention of bidding, Jotham's speech, and the manifest favor with which it was received, made them ashamed to speak.

The auctioneer paused for breath, and began again.

"What am I offered for this very valuable farm tillage mowing and wood-lot; don't all speak at once gentlemen; give me a thousand dollars?"

Still no answer.

"Bidding don't seem to be very lively, Mr. Downing," said the auctioneer. "I think we shall have to postpone this sale till a fair day, when we can gather a large company," and he descended from the block, amid shouts of laughter.

"I suppose you think you have done a mighty smart thing, Jotham Hodgkins," said Mr. Downing, speaking so as to be heard by all present; "but I don't see it in that light. If we had sold to-day, there might have been something left for the deacon; now, I'll sell at private sale for my claim and expenses."

"Them as buys 'll git a fust rate title," retorted Jotham; but as he strode towards 'Squire Williams' house, ten minutes later, his reflections were far from pleasant.

"Ther fools ain't all dead yet," he muttered, "an' I don't know as Jotham Hodgkins ain't one on 'em. Jotham Hodgkins, yer'd better let oratin' 'lone for the futer; 'tain't yer trade."

While " doing his chores " he was mentally engaged in an effort to decide whether, by an unwonted display of oratory, he had aided Deacon Goodwin, or had plunged him deeper into difficulty.

" Wall, what's did's, did," thought he, after turning the matter over and over in his mind, " what's did is did, an' can't be ondid. There ain't no use in cryin' fur spilt milk neether; best way is ter see ef yer can't git neether pail full somewheres, do suthin' so 'twon't be so bad arter all."

Jotham thrust his hands into his pockets, threw up his chin, and concluded, " I'll send the 'Square over ter Mr. Downings tomorrer mornin' an' tell him ter holt on er while, an' I'll trot reound an' see ef we can't git the money tergether. Dunno as I ken; ain't no harm tryin'. I ain't got mor'n a hundred or so loose cash jest neow. An' ther 'Square he's short 'nuff jest neow; heve

ter loose what he lent Uncle David, I s'pose. Couldn't be a wus time ter pick up a thousan' or tew dollers 'mong ther farmers; ain't no harm tryin'; give ther deacon a leetle breathin' spell eny heow."

CHAPTER VIII.

"RIDE with me, Jaques," said Mr. Downing, as he unhitched his horse from the front fence.

"Well, I suppose I might as well."

"Going our way, Mins?"

"Yes."

"Get right in," said Mr. Downing. "I'll carry you as far as I go on your road."

The two men whom he had depended on as bidders accepted the invitation.

"I'll come up with that Jotham yet," said Mr. Downing.

"Who is he?"

"He's a green country gawk that's been 'Squire Williams hired man for a few years."

"Oh, I supposed he was on his own land, he flourishes round so."

"To be sure he does. I'll take some of the flourish out of him though. What do you say, Mins? want to buy that place for twenty-five hundred dollars?"

"I thought you said you'd sell it for your claim."

"My claim and expenses. Back interest, and so on."

"Wel-l, I don't know."

"Why, man! It's worth twice that if it's worth a dollar."

"Yes, I know if the title was good 't would be; but I don't exactly like the notion of putting money onto a piece of property a man might be ousted out of."

"Who's going to oust yer? The old man will never make out the money."

"No, I don't s'pose he will; but how about that youngster?"

"Josiah? He'll never trouble you."

"I don't know 'bout that," interposed Jaques; "he went off in a hurry; who knows but he'll come back in the same way? Stranger things have happened."

"Oh, poh! I tell you there ain't the least chance in the world of his coming back," said Mr. Downing. "He's got reason enough for staying away. Don't you s'pose, if he should show his head in these parts, the first thing would be, where's that two thousand dollars? I tell you he hain't got anything to say to that question, and he'll look out mighty sharp not to run against it."

"What if he didn't take the money away with him?" said Jaques.

"I tell you he did," retorted Mr. Downing. "What's become of it if he didn't?"

"I like the farm," said Mins. "With a

smart man to carry it on, it would pay first rate; but I guess I'd better let it alone."

"Suppose we call it twenty-three hundred," said Mr. Downing.

"I'll think about it a little while first. You see, the fact is, I ain't very squeamish, and if I could get clean papers I don't know but I might buy. But them two old folks there, in that sitting room, they kinder foller me. I s'pose I'd get used to it in a while, but 'twould be a while before I could go into that sitting room and not see 'em."

"That's a fact," said Jaques.

"If they'd had any decency they'd have cleared out before to-day," said Mr. Downing; they had notice enough. I saw what they were up to; trying to make everybody pity 'em, so they wouldn't dare to bid. Well, I can't spend my time going back and forth, make it twenty-two hundred."

Mins hesitated. "What do you say, Jaques. Would you take the place?"

"I don't want it."

"Why not? It's a good trade, isn't it?"

"I don't know but it is."

"Why don't you want it, then? Afraid of your wife?" Ha-ha-ha, laughed Mins.

"No, I ain't afraid of my wife; but she wouldn't sleep a night in that house if she'd seen the old deacon and his wife this afternoon. If I should take the farm she'd be sure to find it out, and then there would not be a minute's peace."

"My wife has to do as I say," said Mr. Downing.

"So they say," retorted Jaques.

"Then you don't advise me to buy," said Mins.

"I don't advise you anything about it. All I say is, I don't want the place, and I know my wife would not want it. This is the road we take to ketch the up stage, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Downing. "Well, Mr. Mins, if you want that place for twenty-two hundred dollars, you'd better take it quick; 'twon't be in the market long at that price."

"I'll let you know if I want it."

Mr. Downing drove away, and the two men walked rapidly to meet the stage.

"That farm is cheap enough, Jaques."

"I don't say it isn't, but if you take my advice, you'll let that Downing alone. He ain't the sort of man I like to trade with."

"If I could hold the property two or three years, then I should be safe enough."

"Yes, if the boy didn't turn up."

"Downing is right enough about that. He'll be ashamed to show himself, and if he should, he'll find it hard work to oust me. I should be in possession; if he should come home with half a dozen bags of gold on his back, as the runaway boys do in the story books, he could buy me off, and he'd have to pay roundly for my improvements."

"You know your own affairs, but I shouldn't be easy in that house, thinking all the time, that like as not, it belonged to the old folks. I'm just about sure there's something wrong there. If there ain't, what does Downing hurry up things so for? They told me there to-day, the first the old gentlemen knew of it, was seeing the advertisement in the newspaper; and Downing didn't leave a day; he set the time for the auction the very day the last advertisement came out. You or I'd think we ought to have more notice than that."

"'Tis rather rough."

"Rough! I guess it is. If I'd known how it was, I wouldn't have set foot inside that door. And I tell you what it is, Mins, if you have anything to do with that place you'll rue it."

"May be I shall, but 'tain't me that's selling the old man up; if I don't buy the place, somebody else will."

"Then it'll be somebody else that'll have trouble about it. There'll be trouble as sure as fate. If there's nothing worse, the whole town will be against you; it'll be a good deal as that chap said."

"I don't care that for his bluster," returned Mins, snapping his finger and thumb together. "When a man tries to bully me, I'm all the more determined to have my own way."

"Why did you not bid, then?"

"Oh, I thought I wouldn't. Likely 'nough the town's people will be sulky, but that would blow over before long."

"I've told you what I think."

"'Bleged to you for the advice."

"That you don't mean to take?"

"I don't know but I do."

But the more the man thought of the cultivated farm, capable of so much greater improvement, and of the absurdly low price

at which it was offered, the less important seemed Jaques objections and scruples. And so he thought, and thought, of the inducements to close the bargain, always thrusting aside the picture as it would rise before his mind's eye, of the patriarch going out from his inheritance.

'Squire Williams was duly "sent" by Jotham the next morning to open negotiations with Mr. Downing. Heartily sympathizing with Deacon Goodwin, he was ready to act upon any suggestion which gave hope of relief.

Mr. Downing received 'Squire Williams with ostentatious cordiality; he wished his partners to believe him to be on good terms with the leading men of Clifton.

"Good morning, 'Squire Williams, good morning, sir."

"Good morning, Mr. Downing. You are quite busy, I see. I will tell my business at once."

"No busier than usual," said Mr. Downing, rubbing his hands, "we are always busy, in fact; always glad to see our friends, though."

'Squire Williams stated his errand. Mr. Downing listened with a deferential air, shook his head with a concerned air, and said, "Now I do wish, 'Squire Williams, you had spoken of this yesterday; then I could have said yes or no, at once. I should be most happy to oblige you, but I'm a man of my word. What I say, I mean; what I mean, I stick to. No, the fact is, I gave a man the refusal of that place yesterday. I'm very sorry, sir, but I know you wouldn't have me break my word."

'Squire Williams soon took his leave, "bowed out" by the polite Mr. Downing, who returned to his place behind the counter, well pleased that he had had the opportunity of refusing a favor to the former chairman of Clifton School Committee.

In the course of the day, Mins appeared. "I've been thinking over that farm," said he.

"Been several in this morning, talking about it," said Mr. Downing. "Let me see, what did I offer it to you for? Twenty-five hundred, wasn't it?"

"Twenty-two at last."

"Twenty-two?" repeated Mr. Downing, with well feigned surprise, "too low, too low. Don't see what I was thinking of. I could get more for it. I shall lose money, but I'm a man of my word; if I said so, I shall have to let you have it. I always stick to a bargain, if it does go against me."

"I've been thinking it over, and I guess I might as well trade."

"Pay cash?"

"Yes, cash down when I get the deed."

"When do you want it?"

"Well—you—see," Mins stammered, took a piece of twine from the counter, twisted it

round his finger, tied and untied it, put the end into his mouth and began chewing it, while Mr. Downing stood waiting for his answer.

"You see — the fact — is — when's the old deacon going to move?" burst at last from his lips.

"That needn't give you any difficulty. He'll go when you are ready to come."

"That's it. I'd rather he'd go 'fore I come."

"All right. He shall go when you say."

"You see, I'd like the place, and if it's going to be sold I might as well have it as anybody; but I can't turn the old folks out. I want to move week after next, say Tuesday, and I don't want to be moving in while he's going out —— I mean, I can't see the deacon and the old lady there again."

"I see, I understand, I'll attend to it."

"When the coast is clear, I'm ready to take the deed and pay the money."

"It's taken you some time to make it out, Mr. Mins. There's no occasion to be so chicken-hearted. If you'll come over the middle of the week, say Wednesday, we'll finish up the business."

Mins went out of the store feeling as if he had been picking a pocket."

"I shall be glad when the job is off my hands," thought Mr. Downing, for though he was determined to carry through to the very end, his persecution of Deacon Goodwin, he would gladly have escaped from facing his victim again. If his harsh treatment had been met by violent opposition or vituperation, he would have been at home in the affair; but to be confronted with calm, quiet dignity he had not expected, and even now, when the twenty-two hundred dollars was almost in his grasp, he felt as if he had been baffled. Truly Uncle David's strength was "to sit still."

But the message must be sent directly to Deacon Goodwin. A written demand he might not heed, and it was necessary for Mr. Downing to know whether the premises would be vacated without a resort to more vigorous measures. He must go himself or send a trusty messenger. Yes, that would do; he would send his son; the errand could be explained to him at dinner time.

Mr. Downing had nearly finished his meal when his son came in. Mr. Downing swallowed his food with astonishing rapidity, passing large slabs of meat, bread, pudding, etc., into his mouth, much as we have seen two men load bricks, one standing on the ground, taking two bricks into his hands at a time, and with a slight toss, giving them to the one in the cart. Mr. Downing never wasted time over his food, but took in edibles in a prompt, business-like manner. Seth came into the dining-room, slung his hat

half way across the room with so dexterous a twist of his wrist, that it landed on his mother's work table between the windows, and carried sudden confusion into the pile of garments and materials which the long-suffering mender had labored upon and with all the morning, when not engaged in more active duties. Stockings, bits of cloth, and spools, tumbled, fluttered or rolled to dark corners, unheeded by Seth, who drew his chair noisily back over the floor-cloth, seized a full tumbler with both hands, and poured the contents down his throat, then applied himself to the disposing of "solids" much in the paternal style.

Mr. Downing rose from the table, saying, "I want you, Seth, to go over to Clifton this afternoon, and tell Deacon Goodwin I have sold his place and he must leave by Wednesday night. If he doesn't, I'll send an officer and put his traps out into the road."

A knowing look came over Seth's face; he heard his father to the last word; the great boy threw back his head, opened his large mouth and laughed aloud.

"Now, you don't think I am going to do your dirty work for you? No, thank you, you may go yourself."

"I can't go. I am very busy to-day. Wales is sick, and Clark's gone home. I can't leave."

"Well, Murdock is sick. I s'pose he is. I ain't seen him this morning, and Righter 'll want to go home. I can't leave."

"It's hard if my son won't do an errand for me."

"I say I won't do your dirty work," was the angry retort.

This was not the first altercation between father and son, and Mr. Downing knew that he could not compel obedience. The next day he went himself to Deacon Goodwin, and

made his statement in scarcely less plain language than he had put it in at his own table. Uncle David made no answer. Mr. Downing repeated, in a louder voice, what he had said. Still no answer. Again he raised his voice and reiterated his demand.

"I heard you the first time," said Uncle David, in his usual conversational tone.

"Well, I mean what I say."

Again Mr. Downing was completely baffled; he might just as well have sent his directions by mail, for he returned as wise as he came; he knew just as much of Uncle David's intentions when he entered the house as when he left it. But Deacon Goodwin was prepared for the summons; they came in no ruder form than he expected; it now only remained for him to carry out the resolution formed and expressed two weeks before.

CHAPTER IX.

AGAIN the red flag fluttered from the fence in front of Deacon Goodwin's house. Hardly twenty-four hours had elapsed since he had asked Mr. Gray to make the needed arrangements for the sale of his personal property, but a motley concourse had been gathered, called together by that mysterious system of telegraphy which exists in all country towns. A system, which for promptness and despatch, rivals signal fires and all old-fashioned styles of communication, and in its diffusiveness, even the electric messenger itself.

From house, from workshop, and from field they came, men, women and children. The

occurrence was so unusual in that community, that it called out the interest of all, the commiseration of most, and in some, it brought to light that singular phrase of curiosity which finds its gratification in the hints which a household auction gives of family life.

"I don't see what on *airth* 'll become on the tongs," said Jotham, gazing round.

"The tongs?" asked Mrs. Gray, in utter astonishment.

"Yes, I shouldn't think ther wus nobody lef ter hum ter keep ther cat frum eatin' on 'em."

"I've left mine safe, that's all I know. I don't trouble myself about my neighbors."

"Deacon's over ter yer 'us."

"Yes, Mr. Gray persuaded him to stay with us over Sunday, till he could get settled up a little."

"He hain't saved nothin', hes he?"

"Nothing but clothing and his father's old

Bible. It' s got the family record in it, you know."

"It's kinder tough neow, ain't it, ter see all the old deacon's furniture all pitched reound, here, thar an' every whares, Tom, Dick an' Harry carryin' on it off?"

"I hope they'll bid well; Mr. Gray had hard work to get the auctioneer to come. He said he'd rather he'd get somebody else; it went against his feelings."

"'Twould go agin a' most enny man's feelin's 'cept Downing's. He hain't got no feelin's. Ther auction chap is beginnin'."

As the assembly was too numerous to be accommodated in the medium sized rooms of the farm house, the goods to be sold were removed to the yard. The auctioneer prefaced the sale with an expression of kindly feeling, in which he said he had no doubt all present shared, for the venerable couple who had gone out from their home that day, and

appealed to each and every one to help him make his account of sales as satisfactory as possible.

One thing after another was held up, or placed beside the block on which the seller stood. Bidding was rapid; when it began to flag, Jotham's voice was heard. "Ain't goin' ter heve them things goin fur no sech price es that;" and he would double the last offer. In one or two instances he bid a second time before any one else had spoken.

"Bidding on yerself, Jotham?" said a man at his elbow.

"Wall, yes, biddin' on merself ef nobody else won't bid on me; ef yer don't want me ter make er fool uv myself, bid up, that's all."

A good degree of enthusiasm was excited, and each individual was determined not to leave without some reminder of Uncle David. There was not a person too poor to buy some one thing that Uncle David or Mrs. Goodwin

had used. Even Goody Busy Body cheerfully unwound the yards of tape twisted about the old stocking-foot, and laid down five dollars for the spinning-wheel she had seen "the Deacon's mother spinning her rolls on when David Goodwin was a boy."

When the books, the small library that had been their owner's solace in many troublous times, were put up, Mr. Dalton bid the volumes off, one after another. When the furniture of the sitting room came under the hammer, competition ran high; but the old clock, the straight, high-backed, flag-seated chairs, the tall desk, the braided carpet, were each and all knocked down to Jotham Hodgkins, at prices far beyond their actual value.

"Going to set up housekeeping, Jotham?" asked Mr. Wright.

"See 'beout it," he answered, as he made his way up to the table where James Gray was receiving payment for articles sold.

At six o'clock all of Deacon Goodwin's personal property had passed into the possession of others. The animals which he had fed and petted, the table from which from infancy he had thankfully taken his daily bread, all, all were no longer his. The road near the house, the green door-yard in front, presented a busy scene. Wagons of every description were being loaded with the different purchases.

Mr. Dalton sought out Jotham Hodgkins in the crowd. "I don't wish to be prying, Mr. Hodgkins," said he, "but may I ask what you purpose doing with the furniture you have bought this afternoon?"

"Well, I thought I wouldn't tell nobody, but I don't mind tellin' on you. You see, I wus er thinkin', that if Uncle David and Miss Goodwin mus go ter ther poor'us, mebbe 'twouldn't seem so much like the poor'us, if they hed some uv ther own furniture an' things reound 'em."

"Precisely, Mr. Hodgkins. I was quite sure I read your kind heart correctly. And it occurred to me that if you would take the books that I have bought at the same time that you did the furniture, and place them in his room, you would be doing Deacon Goodwin and myself a favor."

"Sartain I will. I'll go right arter ther hay riggin' an' take 'em right along."

CHAPTER X.

IT was while the sale was going on at the Goodwin homestead, that a train of cars came rumbling into the Shiretown depot. The usual committee of reception were there to view the up-train, and see who had come from Boston, and who from "Belluses Falls." Each passenger, as he stepped from the paltform, was scanned by every member of the committee, and all but one passed, apparently, a successful examination; their faces were familiar, or they had so much of the air of people of the region, that no questions were asked. The single exception held in his hand a small black portmanteau, totally different from the russet

valises or leather bags which many of the others clutched, and answered the salutation of the man in shirt-sleeves, who accosted him with, "Take yer right up ter the hotel, sir," only by a shake of the head. His eye rested on a boy, guiltless of shoes, jacket or vest, who was gazing at the newly-arrived as well as the brim of his palm-leaf hat would allow. The urchin and the hat had had the misfortune to be out in a shower the day before, and the hat-rim, indignantly resenting the flood which poured upon it, persistently determined to roll up; its owner was as determined that it should not, and turned it down all round and held it; the result was, a hat good for shade, but baffling for scrutinizing eyes.

"Will you show me the way to the court-house, my lad?" said the stranger.

"I hain't yer lad," returned the boy, who, having made his declaration of independence,

and entered his protest against being "held to service," ran before the new comer. He was fleet-footed, and would have soon been out of sight, had not the people of Shiretown been afflicted with a mania for posts, at the edge of side-walks, before doors and gates; in every place where there was the least chance of getting in a post there was one. Now to pass quietly by a post, or to walk round it, was not "dreamed of" in the young guides "philosophy." He placed both hands on each one, as it came in or beside his pathway, lifted his body with a spring, till it was above the acorn, horse's head, or other tasteful device with which Shiretown delighted to ornament its pets, swung a foot on either side, landed beyond, and ran on, as if there had been no obstruction in his road. The stranger watched the oft-repeated manoeuvre with much amusement, thinking that with some of the taller, the nimble boy would find

his match, and wondering what he would do then; but for any help the boy gave him, he may be wondering on to this day, for he took them all, short posts, and posts two feet taller than himself in the same style, and came down on his bare feet, apparently much refreshed. This varied kind of locomotion was continued for five minutes; then the boy stopped at a corner, pointed to a red brick building, and said, "There yer be." The gentleman gave him twenty-five cents, which he took with an indifferent air, and immediately sought the advice of admiring friends as to the investment of his newly-acquired property. Corn-balls and pea-nuts was the decision, and for the remainder of the day he was a hero, a bounteous man of means, distributing his favors; but the next morning his riches had melted away, and their former owner settled to the level of his boon companions.

One hour after the stranger entered the court house, he was moving at a rapid rate over the road between Clifton and Shiretown, seated in an open buggy, with the sheriff of the county at his side. As they came near to Deacon Goodwin's house, they met the town's people coming from the auction, each with some portion of the household goods in his hand, or on the vehicle in which he rode.

"Too bad, too bad," exclaimed the gentleman. "Can't you drive a little faster, Mr. Sheriff?"

"My horse is all a lather now," said the officer, as he touched the whip to the flank of the panting beast.

They dashed into the yard just behind Jotham and his hay-rigging, in which he was intending to convey his own purchases and Mr. Dalton's to the poor farm.

The sheriff's horse stopped. Each breath, as it came and went, shook the whole frame of the noble animal.

The sudden arrival attracted the attention of all, and every one stopped whatever work he had in hand. Few were there who did not recognize the officer, but the gentleman who accompanied him was an utter stranger. He stood up in the buggy, and, in a clear voice, made the announcement:

"An injunction has been issued restraining J. J. Downing, for six months, from selling the real estate of David Goodwin." And added, "I propose that all those who have purchased his personal property shall allow it to remain upon his premises for that time. I pledge myself to be responsible for all loss or damage that may accrue. I refer you to the sheriff at my side."

"It's all right, is it, Mr. Evans?" asked Mr. Gray.

"All right," was the reply, and the officer produced a document from his side pocket.

Jotham stood in his hay-rigging in mute

amazement, his hat pushed back and mouth and eyes wide open; but the fact that Deacon Goodwin was not now in Mr. Downing's power soon gained a lodgment in his brain, and he was ready for action.

He shouted, "Put them ere things back where they 'long, ev'ry one on 'em;" and seizing his reins from the stake where he had hung them, turned his hay-rigging round, regardless of the wheels of his neighbors' wagons, and of the legs of the poor horses which cringed and backed in their attempts to avoid the ponderous vehicle. Once out of the yard, he lashed old Jack till he had forced him into a half canter, half trot (it must be confessed the faithful Jack was not a graceful animal), and as he overtook one after another going home with their recent acquisitions, called, "Take them things back, take them things back, I tell yer; there's er 'junction, the Deacon's place hain't goin' ter be sold."

The unexcitable old farmers and the motherly dames had hardly wiped away the blinding dust which the sheriff's buggy had thrown into their eyes, and wondered if Jotham was not on the way to an insane asylum. Nevertheless, Jotham went clattering and shouting on until he thought he had overtaken those who were first to leave the sale. Other messengers went in other directions, and almost every article was returned that night. Friendly hands replaced them as well as they were able, that the much-esteemed couple might return, if they so wished, to the shelter of their own roof.

When Jotham came back, the stranger was standing stroking the face of the sheriff's horse. 'Squire William's man eyed him with much curiosity, and as great a degree of awe as he ever allowed himself to feel for a fellow man.

"Know who he is?" he asked of James Gray.

"No, I never saw him before."

"Don't Evans know?"

"Yes, I suppose so: but he was in a great drive and went right off. He said he would be back in half an hour, and left the stranger to take care of his horse."

"Wonder heow under ther sun, an' *mune*, an' stars, he dun it," said Jotham, seeming to think the mention of the heavenly bodies, one after another, made his expression of surprise more emphatic.

"Oh, he's a lawyer; they generally know what they are about."

"Yes, s'spose they dew. I allers thought that ef yer mortgaged yer farm, an' yer couldn't pay, the chap's that's got the mortgage would turn yer eout ef he wus er mind too, an' nothin' could stop him."

"So I thought."

"I'd like ter know heow he dun it: good mind to ax him," said Jotham, sidling

towards the gentleman, who said, "I think this horse, he is a fine animal, would be more comfortable if he had a good rubbing down."

"I'll attend to that," said James Gray, unhitching the traces and leading the horse towards Deacon Goodwin's barn.

"And I," continued the stranger, "would be glad to get back to Shiretown this evening; can I find a conveyance? Mr. Evans is obliged to go on farther."

What an opportunity for Jotham to unravel a mystery. "It's er chap 'beout my size that'll take yer over there. Just yer come over ter ther 'Squares, an' see ther Square, an' Miss Williams shall give yer some supper, an' I'll do up ther chores in no time."

"Perhaps you'd like to see the deacon," said Mr. Gray.

"I should, indeed," was the reply.

"That'll do, Jotham," said Mr. Gray. "As soon as you are ready, come round to

my house and you will find the gentleman there."

"Go ahead," said the delighted Jotham, as he mounted his light, easy, running vehicle, the hay rigging, and drove out of the yard.

"Now," said Mr. Gray to the stranger, "I will introduce you to Uncle David and his wife, if you please."

Mrs. Gray was already at home, busy in the preparation of an unusually tempting meal in honor of her visitors, who were in the sitting-room, each trying to keep a cheerful countenance for the sake of the other, but each felt, though they were now respected guests in a friend's house, the shadow of the pauper's roof. The chill of the pauper's fireside had already penetrated to the core of their hearts and made the slow-moving, vital fluid still more tardy than ever; the bitter morsel from the table, which must be shared with the disfigured in mind, body or

soul, was, in thought, already within their lips, already forcing its way down their parched throats.

Mr. Gray was startled to see the change which the rough hand of trouble had wrought in the venerable couple since the morning sun had begun his race; a change which time, with its gentle touch, might not have brought about in successions of summers and winters. He ushered into the room the stranger whose arrival had caused such a revolution in affairs at the Goodwin farm. "Deacon Goodwin and Mrs. Goodwin, Mr. ——; the gentleman has brought some news for you, Uncle David."

At the mention of news, Mrs. Goodwin rose hastily, came towards the stranger, laid her hand on his arm, and said, "Have you seen Josiah? Is he well? When is he coming home?"

"No, madam. I wish I had brought you

word of your son. I come for another purpose."

The poor woman, deserted of him who should have been the prop of her declining years, sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. The tears, which by strong effort she had kept back all that day, now refused to be controlled and streamed from her eyes. Not a word was spoken. The husband laid his hand on "the auld wife's" shoulder, and the pent-up grief having found its outlet, by degrees she became calmer, dried her eyes, looked at the stranger and said, "I hope you will excuse me, sir. It's all very foolish of me, but maybe if you could know how a mother feels when she has laid her sons and her daughters, one after another, in the grave, till only one is left, and that one always in her mind and never in her sight, always dying but never carried to his rest, not alive it may be, but always watched

for. If you only could know what it is, may be you wouldn't think I was such a foolish old woman after all."

"I see nothing foolish in a mother's love for an only son," said the tall, bearded stranger, stooping reverently and kissing the furrowed forehead.

"May you and yours never know a living grief," said the mother, taking his hand.

Deacon Goodwin, wishing to turn his wife's thoughts from their sorrow, had twice opened his lips to speak; but the words did not come. He stood some moments before he could utter a syllable; then said, "I did not understand the gentleman's name, Mr. Gray."

"My name is Carleton Randolph," said the gentleman, who was an old acquaintance of our readers.

"Mr. Randolph," said Deacon Goodwin, "not our young friends' Uncle Carl?"

"I have a nephew, Carl Bartlett."

"Then I know you well," said Deacon Goodwin, grasping his hand.

"And he has told me so much of his Uncle David that I feel I know him well. We are old friends," said Mr. Randolph.

"Mr. Randolph has been your friend to-day," said Mr. Gray. "He has taken your house out of Mr. Downing's hands for a while; he can tell you how, better than I can;" and the farmer went out to return to the old house and aid in restoring order there.

"What was that Mr. Gray was saying?" asked Deacon Goodwin. "I've had so much on my mind lately, and things come so harsh, I don't think I hear or understand as quick as I used to."

"I've taken the liberty of interfering in your affairs," said Mr. Randolph, "and your home is yours for six months longer."

"Then we shan't be turned out of the old house, after all?"

"I hope not."

"Thank God," said the white-haired man, "and thank you, the good God's instrument."

The joyous expression on Uncle David's face made it look almost young again.

"The matter is taken out of Downing's hand for the present," said Mr. Randolph, "and we have time to look into his right to pursue you as he has. If I understand correctly, you do not acknowledge the debt."

"Why," said Deacon Goodwin, "Mr. Downing has all the papers; he could prove his claim in a court of law, I suppose. But for all that, the debt has been paid. I sent my own son; my Josiah paid the money, and left the mortgage with Mr. Murdock."

"What did he do with the note?"

"That's what we don't know. He ought to have destroyed it, or brought it to me; but he didn't, and Mr. Downing has got it now."

"You are sure it is the same one?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen it. I couldn't mistake it. The fact was, I borrowed the money to let my son have it; not Josiah, Samuel; he was older than Josiah. He had an offer to go into a store as clerk, and if he could put in two thousand dollars, the man agreed to take him into the business in a year. Samuel didn't ask me to do it, but I knew he was a steady, industrious boy, and I was sure he'd do the best he could with the money, and I thought he'd make a good business man. He never liked farming; he always used to be trading when he was quite small. Well, I told him if he would agree to pay the interest, and could find some one to take the mortgage, I was willing to let him have it. I thought he would be able to take it up in a year or two, and he thought so too. He said he wouldn't have me do it on any account, if he was not pretty sure he could. The next

day he came home and said Mr. Downing would let him have the money. I'd rather have taken it of almost any one else, but I didn't know as I had any good reason for feeling so, and I didn't object. Well, Samuel got along tolerably well for the first six months. He worked pretty hard, to be sure: but he liked the place, and the people in the store liked him, I believe. After that, things seemed to go wrong. There were two or three bad debts, and some of their stock that they thought was going to rise, fell on their hands. One thing after another was against my son. At last, a man that lived close by where he boarded, came over and told us he was sick. Wife and I went and brought him home. He had a run of fever; the fever turned, but he never seemed to get up from it. He worried about the mortgage, and what we should do if he shouldn't live to pay it, and was so sorry he ever let me do it. I used to

think if he could only get rid of thinking of that all the time, if he could only forget it, if it was only for one hour a day, he might get well. I suppose two thousand dollars does not sound like much to you; but it was a good deal to us. We farmers, most of us, make money slowly. My boy died, and I never got any thing for the two thousand dollars I put into the business. I kept on paying the interest regularly; but Mr. Downing wanted me to pay the whole. He was so hard on me two or three times, that at last I managed, 'Squire Williams helped me to the money, to pay the whole, and never expected to hear from Mr. Downing again. I ought to have been more careful. I ought to have gone over to Mr. Murdock's and got the papers after he had had time to see to it; but I've always known Mr. Murdock, and his father before him; and I always thought any thing was as safe at his office, as it was in my

hands. I ought to have seen that the note was taken care of; but I didn't; and now Mr. Downing has got it. It's the right one, I know, for Samuel wrote it. I know his hand writing, and there was a small blot on it that I made when I signed it. Yes, it's the same note."

"The discharge is not on your record, is it?"

"No, Mr. Downing wanted the mortgage recorded at the county town, and I thought it would be just as well to have him acknowledge the discharge there; it would save him and Mr. Murdock trouble and some time. When I was over to Shiretown I meant to get the papers of Mr. Murdock, and I could have it put on record here any time, you know. I sent a line by my son, when he paid the money, to Mr. Downing, asking him to go to the lawyer's office as soon as he could, and Josiah was to have Downing make the paper

right, and then carry it to Mr. Murdock's office and speak to him about it."

"He did as you directed."

"Yes, sir."

"It is the mortgagee who holds the papers. You saw them, you say, the note and the mortgage?"

"I saw the note. I didn't see the mortgage; that is on record though. I suppose the records will stand."

"Will you give me the exact date of this payment?"

"Wife can tell you that. She remembers better than I do."

Yes, the mother did remember. The day, the hour, the moment when she last saw her son, and all the events which transpired at that time were so linked with his departure, that each was perfectly clear in her memory. The year, the month, the day was given, and noted in Mr. Randolph's memorandum book

As he listened, his admiration for the venerable father, the sorrow-stricken mother, increased more and more. Not one word of reproach for the wayward son, though he had brought disgrace and suffering daily on them while at home, and in his flight and unexplained absence, had plunged them into their present difficulties. No suspicions harbored in their minds of his integrity. The lawyer could not push his inquiries as he had intended. What though their son had rejected the bread which his father's house had provided, and gone out to feed on the "husks that the swine did eat," they were anxiously waiting to go and meet him and fall on his neck and kiss him. He was their absent boy to be guarded from false accusations. No, it was from other sources that their friend must gain the evidence of Josiah's guilt or innocence.

Mrs. Gray's summons to the tea-table soon

came. With an apology for the absence of "Mr. Gray and the boys," she requested her guests to be seated. It was not till they were rising from the table that the master of the house entered, and spoke in an under tone to Mr. Randolph, who answered, in an audible voice, "Ah! that is good. Many hands make light work. I feared you would not do it." Then turning to Deacon Goodwin, he said, "Your friends and neighbors have replaced your goods in the house, and will esteem it a favor if you will use them as if they had never been disturbed."

"Oh, can we go home to-night?" said Mrs. Goodwin, looking imploringly in the face of her husband.

"I see nothing to prevent, if you wish it," said Mr. Randolph.

"Hadn't you better stay here to-night?" interposed Mrs. Gray.

"If we awake in the morning in our own

home, it will seem as if we had never left it, David," pleaded Mrs. Goodwin.

"I was afraid the men folks had not made it look very comfortable," said Mrs. Gray; "and I thought I could go over with you in the morning and help you straighten things out."

Mr. Gray laughed. "My wife hasn't much opinion of us men, if there is anything to be done in doors," said he. "We had Mrs. Wright and two or three others to help us, mother."

"We are much obliged to you, Mrs. Gray," said Deacon Goodwin; "but I believe wife is right, we old folks are better off in our own home. Our own home! Two hours ago we could not say that we had a home that we could call our own. We are indebted to you, Mr. Randolph, that we can a little longer say, our own home." The words "our own home" came again and again to his lips,

as if he would exhaust all their sweetness in the repetition.

"Oh, no, my dear sir, if there is any indebtedness it is not in my favor. It was my nephew's enthusiastic account of his Uncle David and Aunt Goodwin, that made me wish to render them some return for the pleasure they had given him."

"Won't you come with us to our home," said Deacon Goodwin, "and then you can tell him that you saw us there."

Mrs. Goodwin was already putting on bonnet and shawl, in trembling haste, like that of a child who fears second thoughts may deprive her of a promised pleasure. With a silent pressure of the hand, the venerable woman took leave of her kind hostess. With a hearty "God bless you," the husband passed out. Mr. Gray went with them, lest he might have overlooked somewhat that would contribute to their comfort. Mr. Randolph, that

he might see them reinstated in their own home.

As they crossed the threshold, the white-haired man raised his hat from his head; the two younger men almost unconsciously followed his example, and stood with bowed heads, while he repeated the words, "Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass."

Mrs. Goodwin went from room to room, opening one door after another, with the air

and satisfaction of one examining a new habitation; but her husband was quite content to find himself once more seated in his high-backed rocking-chair, and exclaimed, "Can it be only a few hours since we went out from here? it seems more like weeks, like months."

It was not till Mr. Randolph saw him in the sitting-room, where we have been so often with our readers, that he fully realized the unfeeling recklessness of the man who would break up such a home with rude haste, would drive such a man from his inherited hearth-stone, with no more consideration than he would cattle from an enclosure. These thoughts were in his mind, when he looked up, and saw Jotham at the gate waiting for him.

CHAPTER XI.

JOTHAM'S "chores" were done that evening with a speed worthy the progressive nineteenth century. The sleepy, well-fed animals belonging to 'Squire Williams, accustomed to his deliberate manner of moving about among them, were bewildered and far from pleased with the off-hand mode he had adopted, and considered their dignity outraged by his unceremonious, "Get up ther." "What yer 'beout?" "Stan' reoun', I say," and were less tractable than usual. However, the "chores" were done, and there was Jotham at Deacon Goodwin's gate, talking with James Gray, who had waited to intercept him

as he drove by. No wonder Mr. Randolph smiled when he saw his charioteer in the open wagon. His body was bent forward, so as to bring his face within less than a foot of his knees, the left hand, in which he held the reins, rested on his left knee; his right knee supported his right elbow, and his right hand his chin; a comfortable position, at least Jotham thought so, but one that rather interfered with the use of the vocal organs; still Jotham would not be Jotham if he didn't talk, but as every syllable required an upward motion of the jaw, the effect was very ludicrous.

When Mr. Randolph appeared at the door, Jotham was erect in an instant, threw up his head as if looking for something in the blue above, until his chin and his neck were nearly in a straight line, then brought it down again with movement much like the shutting of a pocket-knife; not one a boy has opened and

shut till the corners are well rounded, but one that has a good spring and shuts with a sharp click. Having executed this manoeuvre, which was to him in lieu of a bow, he made room for Mr. Randolph. As soon as they were fairly seated, the driver turned, looked directly in his passenger's face, and asked, "What may I call yer name, sir?"

"My name is Randolph."

"Not neffu nor nothin' ter old John?"

"Old John?"

"Yas. Old John Randolph uv Ronoke, yer kneow. Good natur'd feller he wus, yer kneow."

"No, no relation of his, that I know of."

"Wall, neow, heow'd yer dew it?" speaking in the same tone that he used when he wished to coax Rover towards him.

"Do what?"

"Why, put Downin's pipe eout."

"Stop the sale, you mean?"

"Yas, that's what I mean. Heow on airth d yer dew it?"

"I got an injunction."

"Wall, heow'd yer dew it? Where'd yer git it? What on airth is er 'junction? There's er place deown berlow here where er feller comes inter the cars an' hollers, 'Passengers for Soretogy, an' suthin' or ruther, take 'tuther cars;' an' there's lots er tracks comin' tergether all criss cross. That's what I thought yer called 'junction."

"Yes, that *is* a junction, but this is an *in*-junction. You have got some pretty steep hills round here."

"Thinks he's goin' to put me off ther scent," was Jotham's mental comment as he gave his companion a sideways look; but he was too keen to be turned from his purpose in that way, and answered, "Ya-as."

"Muddy at the foot of these hills in the spring, is it not?"

"Y-a-a-s."

"Do teams ever get stuck in the mud?"

"Y-a-a-s;" and after an instant pause, "There's a mighty bad place clost ter where Downin' used ter keep his store." Jotham was on "the scent." From "Downin's store to Downin's" business transactions, the way was easy.

"Suppose you should get your team set at the foot of one of these hills, and another man was backing on to you, what would you do?"

"I'd holler eout to him, Whoa-a," said Jotham, in a loud voice.

The horse stopped short in the middle of the road. Jotham, entirely unprepared, illustrated the inertia of matter, and fell forward, grasping the dasher. He recovered himself, much to the amusement of Mr. Randolph, whose hand on the back of the seat saved him from a like accident.

"Go alcng. What yer doin' on," said Jotham, as soon as he had gained his balance. "Nobody ain't talking ter yer, ger 'long," and he gave the misguided animal a sharp cut with his whip.

"Suppose he wouldn't 'who-a,'" said Mr. Randolph, careful to speak in a low tone.

"Then I'd see if I couldn't chock his wheels fur him."

"Precisely. We have just put some blocks under Mr. Downing's wheels."

"Wall, now, that's good, but they won't halt, will they?"

"They will hold in this case for six months."

"Couldn't yer keep clappin' on 'em under?"

"The blocks? Yes, we could, if the judges would give them to us."

"Oh, yer have ter git 'em uv the judges. S'pose they keep er lot on 'em ready made,'

said Jotham, whose ideas of the nature of an injunction were more than ever confused, being now made up of railway tracks, wooden blocks, and judges presiding in court.

"No, they don't keep them on hand exactly," said Mr. Randolph, laughing. "The fact is, the law is rather hard sometimes; subjects a man to hardship, I mean."

"Guess it does sometimes, when it shuts er feller up an' he don't want ter be, an' most allus he don't."

"That is not exactly what I mean. Generally when a man is shut up it is 'for his country's good.' But I am not speaking of criminal cases now. I am talking of cases where property of one kind or another is at stake. In such cases, often a man will have law on his side and he won't have justice; isn't it plain that he may use the law to do his creditor or whatever his opponent may be, a great injustice."

"Yes, I s'pose so," said Jotham, to whom all this sounded like an irreverent invasion of the majesty of the law.

"Very well. It is plain, too, that we can't have a law to meet every man's case, but we can have judges to whom any man can go by his counsel if he pleases, and tell his story, and ask for power to prevent his adversary doing him wrong; ask the right to say, give me time to protect myself before this or that injury is done me, or my property is taken. Now that is just what I did in this case. Here is Downing. As far as I have been able to ascertain, he has law on his side. Deacon Goodwin has not the first item of testimony in his favor. Downing undertakes to enter into possession of the property without giving the mortgagor any reasonable notice; there is where he made a mistake; that makes me think that if he has the law on his side he has not justice. That is what made me go

into the court room and ask for an injunction. Probably I could not have got it, if the judge had not been a college class mate, and if I had not found there the lawyer I studied with, one of the kindest-hearted men that ever breathed. We got a chance to represent our case. That there was an old man turned out of doors by the power of the law. We represented that we wanted time to examine the evidence; that at least the old man ought to have a chance to try and meet the claim. The judge wanted to put it off and consider the question, but Mr. Winnot, that is my old friend, held up the case in such a light that the judge could not say, no. Of all the men to make an off-hand appeal, when his feelings are interested, and he thinks he has right on his side, there is none I know of like Winnot. The old man bereaved of his children, the old wife, 'wrinkled, haggard and gray' to all but the husband; to him 'young, blooming

and fair' as on her wedding day. The old man erect and vigorous, dwelling under the roof that echoed to his first infant cry. The bowed old man tottering forth with the weeping wife, driven out by the scourge of the law, wielded by a merciless hand, seeking shelter from charity. 'All we ask,' said he, 'is, that your honor, as the representative of the State that cares for the welfare of the citizens, will protect this defenceless, blameless old man, who has stood in his lot and acted well his part in his day and generation, that you will accord him time to defend himself from malicious persecution. In short, that you will grant us an injunction staying proceedings, that you will grant it without delay. Even now we are wasting precious time in mere words. Even now his household gods are under the auctioneer's hammer, being scattered —'"

"I didn't see no gods," interrupted Jotham,

who had been completely absorbed in the narration. "Deacon didn't hev no gods. Somebody or nuther, er missionary, I believe 'twas, sent him one onct with er master lot uv arms an' legs an' heads, but he lent it to the Sunday school. an' 't got all smashed up. Deacon didn't hev no gods. What's the lawyer chap want ter talk that way fur? It's slanderin' on him."

"He didn't mean gods actually; it was a figure of speech. He meant that his household goods were being scattered."

"Oh — h goods. I thought yer said gods."

"I did say so. Mr. Winnot said so, but he meant goods."

"Wall, why on airth couldn't he say so? Figger uv speech? Putty figger he'd make uv er good, pious, Christian deacon hevein' gods in his house. I don't think much uv that lawyer chap."

"I have good reason to think well of him.

I shouldn't have got my injunction without him."

"Oh, yer'd er managed ter git it yerself, an' wouldn't hed ter bring in no heathen gods ter help yer, I guess."

"At any rate, when the judge understood how Downing had been trying to drive matters up, he gave us our injunction. There again you see that Downing made a mistake in being in such a hurry to grasp the property."

"Couldn't you haul his linch-pins eout, an' pull off his wheels 'tirely?"

"I am going to see if I cannot," replied Mr. Randolph, whose every faculty was aroused, so interested was he in Deacon Goodwin's cause.

"Guess yer ken."

Jotham had unbounded confidence in his new-found friend's ability to manipulate the Downing rolling stock according to his own

pleasure; still, a little advice might not come amiss. After thinking a moment, he resumed his part in the conversation, speaking in a low, confidential voice: "Wall, neow, ef yer wus ter tell ther judge 'beaut ther deacon, that he's er rail good, clever, pious man, an' hain't got no children ter help him 'long, an' that ther old lady's a rail nice, hard workin' woman, that's allers dun her sheere, an' that they won't nuther uv 'em be livin' long in this world no heow, an' 'twas er pity ter be turnin' on 'em eout, seein' 'twouldn't be long they'd want ther old house; — an' ef yer wus ter tell that Downin's er misuble, good fur nothin' feller, allers talkin' mighty fair an' nice, an' allers tryin' ter git ther better uv somebody, neow don't ye think he'd let yer do it?"

"Do what?"

"Why haul Downin's' linch-pins eout; or ef he wouldn't dew that, mebbe he'd give yer

some uv them ere blocks as ud holt long es ther deacon wanted ter live in ther house."

"Perhaps he would; but I rather try some other way first."

"Wall, I guess yer knew what yer 'beout, Mr. Randolph."

"You are a firm friend of Deacon Goodwin?"

"He hain't got no better."

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Keep er secret? Guess I ken take it in. Tie it up. Take good care on it. Not let it eout till yer tell me to, or yer come arter it yerself."

"When my nephew first told me of this case ——"

"How come yer neffer ter know abeout it?"

"He was up here at Mr. Gray's the last summer; you must have seen him."

"Oh yas, yas. He's ther youngster as

liked blackberries, an' wus ser mad 'cause I sed ther wus master mean folks deown ter Boston. Ther deacon took a master likin' ter him."

"He has a high opinion of Deacon Goodwin. When he told me of the case, I thought it was a perfectly plain one; that the young man, Deacon Goodwin's son ——"

"Yas, I know, 'Siah."

"I thought Josiah had disposed of the money among his low associates."

Jotham shook his head.

"But some of my friends, and I agreed with them, thought it a pity that the father and mother should suffer in their old age, for the rascality of a worthless boy ——"

"Ruther hard on 'Siah," said Jotham.

"And I came up here," continued Mr. Randolph, not noticing the interruption, "with the intention of buying up this Downing's claim. I found several men on board

the train who knew Deacon Goodwin, and knew Downing, too. I learned from them something of the way this affair had been managed. The more I heard, the more I thought it possible that Josiah Goodwin had actually executed his commission, and that Downing was taking advantage of the son's absence to pursue the father, and extort money from him. His actions were cold-blooded cruelty, if he had a right to bring such suffering on the father and mother. They are downright villainy if he is falsely accusing the son."

"That's it," said Jotham. "I dunno es I want Downing ter lose nothin' by ther deacon. I dunno es I should feel dreffle bad nuther, ef he did, arter collarin' on him so."

"What I want to know is, did Josiah pay the note?"

"Yas, that's what yer want ter know Wish I knowed; I tell yer ef I did."

"Perhaps you can help me."

"Help enny way I knowed heow. Allers ready ter help."

"Ready to help Downing?" asked Mr. Randolph, smiling.

"No, I *ain't* ready ter help Downin'. He's on ther 'tuther side. Find eout which is ther right side, an' then git holt an' pull all yer know. That's what I say."

"You are a shrewd man, I see," Jotham nodded, "and you are a fast friend of Deacon Goodwin's."

"Hain't got no faster; that's what I told you."

"You was in Clifton when Josiah left. You knew him probably."

"Knowed him well."

"There might be some circumstances connected with his going away that you could tell me that might throw some light on the affair. I should never use any information I might get in this way against him."

"I ain't afeard on it."

"Or you may have a theory of your own about his reason for leaving. What do you think about it? Was it on account of this note being unpaid that he went from home so suddenly and secretly?"

"Now jest look er here! 'Tain't in reason that er chap should sarve his own pa an' ma such er mean trick as that, is it?"

"I can't say. If I had known the young man I could judge better. I have seen some young people who were determined to have their own way and enjoy their own pleasure, whoever suffered in consequence."

"Yas, so've I. There ain't no selfisher critter on this airth, than er youngster that's 'tarmined ter hev his own way, boy or gal, I don't kere which. But then yer see, 'Siah want one er that sort. There wa'n't er better natured feller no wheres than 'Siah Goodwin. Ef he'd onny let drink alone, an' let that set

he got inter 'lone, he'd er been er tip-top chap. Ses I ter him one day, ses I, 'Siah Goodwin, what yer want to be goin' reound with them fellers fur? yer know yer don't like 'em. What yer want tu be muddlin' yerself with drink fur? Yer know 'twill be ther ruin on yer. 'Siah Goodwin,' ses I, 'yer er fool.' 'I know it,' ses he. 'No yer don't, nuther,' ses I; 'yer don't know no such er thing; you act like er fool, though, an' ef yer 've got sense enuff ter know it, why don't yer stop.' ''Tain't easy stoppin' when you're goin' down hill,' ses he. 'The furderer yer git deown, ther harder 'tis ter stop, ain't it?' ses I. He didn't say nuthin', an' 'twon't many days arter that, afore he went off, an' sometimes I've kinder wondered ef that didn't have nothin' ter do with it."

"Then you don't think he went on account of this money?"

"No, I don't."

"You did not know of his being in particular need of money about that time."

"No, he want that I know'd on, but then he might be yer know, an' I know nothin' 'beout it."

"If I could get the least clew I could follow it up. Deacon Goodwin, or his wife, might be able to give me one. I intended to have asked them, but I could not do it. You know them better than I do; perhaps they would not think it strange if you were to ask them, especially as you were friendly to the boy."

"Couldn't do it. I ain't easy scared, but I couldn't do that. There's Mr. Gray or Miss Gray, the old folks think er master sight on them."

"I asked Mr. Gray. He could tell me nothing, and said he did not think Deacon Goodwin could. I suppose he did not care to speak in disparagement of his son."

"Likely."

"I must work in another direction then. I am ready and should be glad to buy Downing's claim if it is a just one. I will buy it, just or not, rather than have Deacon Goodwin disturbed; but, if I can help it, that man Downing does not get a dollar from me, or any one else, as premium for his brutal treatment of the good deacon."

"I declare," exclaimed Jotham, bringing his open hand down on his knee with tremendous force. "What on airth ther reason I didn't think er that afore?"

"What is it?" asked Mr. Randolph, eagerly.

"Why, that ere Seth Downin's in Mr. Murdock's office."

"What, the mortgagees son?"

"Yes, that's him."

"And who is Mr. Murdock?"

"Mr. Murdock over to Shiretown. Lawyer Murdock."

"Ah. Deacon Goodwin's lawyer."

"Yes. He an' his father afore him allus done what law business ther deacon had; 'twan't much, I guess."

"And it was to his office that Josiah Goodwin should have carried the papers."

"I tell you he did kerry 'em there. That Seth Downin' knows he did. 'Pend on't."

"What kind of a young man is he?"

"He ain't much uv a man. He's er big boy an' er smart one too. They dew say he's getting ter be quite considerable uv er lawyer. He's one uv them chaps that's goin' ter be rich, enny how."

"I understand. Not particularly honest."

"No, not *partickler* honest."

"I should hardly think that Deacon Goodwin would entrust business to a lawyer of that class."

"The lawyer ain't in that class, as I know on; it's his boy I wus tellin' on."

"An honest, honorable lawyer does not often employ a tricky clerk."

"I don't s'pose he knows it. I guess Seth looks eout middlin' sharp not ter let Mr. Murdock hear him talk ther kind uv lingo I hev, 'beout gittin' forud uv folks. I never seed Mr. Murdock but onct, then I didn't see nothin' 'gin him, ony he helt his head kinder high, 'nuff sight higher'n his father did afore him. I saw *him* plenty er times, the old Mr. Murdock I mean; he used ter come over ter see ther 'Square, yer know; 'Square Williams, him that I work fur. Ther 'Square he used ter think er' 'stonishin' sight uv him, an' there ain't no honorabler man reound here than ther 'Square; a leetle set in his way sometimes, ter be sure; but he means jest right. I never know'd nothin' but Mr. Murdock's honable. Ef there's enny thing 'tain't all right in his office, I guess he don't know it, nor his clerk nuther. He's been there

ever since I know'd enny thing 'beout 'em. He ain't very smart, looks kinder skeered all ther time."

"A nervous man, I suppose."

"Yas, that's it; narvousy."

"It does not appear to be likely that young Downing would take such a way as that to make money, the danger of detection is so great. However, that looks like a clew, and we will follow it up. If there is anything to be brought to light, we will do it."

"I guess yer'l find it eout, an' yer'l find it jest es I say. This ere is ther Shiretown House."

"You know, of course, that we must be careful not to mention suspicions of any kind. We might put some one on his guard."

"I know all 'beout that. There's a pond over 'tuther side uv ther wall; they dew say there's nice pickerel ter be ketched eout uv it.

Wall, ther feller es wants ter know what yer an' I've been talkin' 'beout, better go ketch one uv them pickerel; he'll tell mor'n I will."

CHAPTER XII.

OUR readers may now wish to ask the same question which Mr. Randolph found it so difficult to answer. Was Josiah Goodwin's sudden disappearance from home the flight of a guilty youth, fearing detection? or, had Mr. Downing once received the payment of the debt which he now so clamorously and cruelly demanded. In order that we may not be bewildered among surmises, but reach a satisfactory solution of the mystery, we must go back a few years, and look at the history of some members of the Downing family.

When Seth's expulsion from the hill school had became an old story, and the gossip it

occasioned had subsided, he spent much of his time in the store, until his father found his presence there was adding to the already fast increasing unpopularity of the establishment. He was then requested, in terms more explicit than elegant, to seek some other lounging place.

Thus thrown upon their own resources, with unlimited control of their time, many boys no more mature in years than Seth, would have found associates among the idle and vicious. But he never lost sight of the fact that he intended to push his way through the world, and by fair means, or by foul, if it must be so, gain a standing as a man of wealth, and he often considered what path in life would be most likely to lead to his good.

He looked with an interest rare in a boy of his age, on the course of those men he had a chance to scrutinize, and framed his theories as to why this one's career was a success,

and that one's a failure. He never let pass an opportunity of being present at a gathering of any description. Many a grave, pompous man, who harangued an assembly or presided at a conclave, would have been astonished had he known that he was the object of such disrespectful criticisms as were passing through the brain of the lad in front.

A trial of general interest, which was in progress at Shiretown, drew Seth, with many other Clifton people, day after day, to the court house. He watched the proceedings closely, noted the manner of different lawyers, and thought wherein he, Seth Downing, could have done better. A great opinion of his own powers had Seth Downing. Before the trial concluded, he had decided on his course in life; it should be that of a lawyer.

"Capital chance for a smart man there," thought he, as he noted the dexterity with which one of the first (first in talent and first

.n lack of conscience) criminal lawyers twisted circumstances, distorted facts and misrepresented testimony. Unbounded was his admiration of the ability and practical skill of the man, and from that day he had a model which he intended to copy, and excel if possible.

"There is no profession, no business like that for a smart man to get in," he concluded: "but then he's got to study tremendously if he's going to make any thing at it. How in the world am I going to get a chance to study? It's no use to ask the old man to send me to college; might if he was a mind to; but he's too mean. I'll push ahead someway, though; 'faint heart never won a fair lady.'"

He had many good qualities. Industrious and persevering when he had an object in view, quick-witted, yet a patient waiter, the material for a man of note was there. But all good qualities were turned aside, and fouled by

the determination to outwit those he might deal with, by his confidence in his own ability to overreach. Had he heeded Jotham Hodgkins, he might have been saved many a disappointment, and avoided many a pitfall on life's journey.

"I tell you what 'tis, Seth Downin'," said Jotham, one day after Seth had been extolling the power of wits well used, "I tell yer what 'tis; honest wits is very good, but wits as ain't honest ain't ser good. Some heow er feller es gots wits as ain't honest, does drefful shaller things sometimes; they seem ter git inter er chaps eyes, and sorter blind him, like ther sun does; an' he don't see what he's runnin' agin', or what he's travellin' inter, an' first thing he knows he comes up ker smash, or comes down ker chunk.

"Now yer see 'taint so with honest wits; they don't get afore er fellers eyes so he can't see nothin' 'cept what's jest under his nose. I

reckon they gits er hind on 'em an' helps him see all around on him. Be es smart es yer mind ter be, Seth Downin', but ef yer ain't honest, yer'll be afeard all the time, somebody 'ell come long an' trip yer up.

"It's kinder like er man es used ter live nigh where I did. He sot eout ter build fences for folks. Wall, one day he was er buildin' fences fur er man, an' 'twas a kinder back road where nobody didn't come much, an' he got 'long mighty fast; yer see he picked eout ther short posts an' them that 'twant ser good es 'tuthers, an' stuck 'em in; he didn't hev ter dig only leetle holes, an' he airnt his pay 'mazin' easy.

"Wall, one dark night what does he do but drive long that ere road. Wall, he got long well 'nuff, till he come ter where he'd bin buildin' fences. 'Thad rained toluble hard, and blow'd toluble hard, a few days 'long back, an' ther wus er string uv his fence

layin' right deown flat on the ground. Wall, he couldn't see it, an' fust thing he know'd he'd druv right straight inter it. Ther hors, he was a high-headed critter, an' that kind uv travellin' wan't very easy travellin' for er hors, an' he got skeered an' run, an' throw'd ther man eout an' broke his leg and smashed ther wagon all ter pieces, an' hurt hisself so bad he had ter be killed.

"That ere man never walked straight arter that. I dunno what was the reason, leg want sot right or suthin'; he always limped arter that. I never seed him but I wanted ter tell him, ef he'd er taken er 'nuther day fur ther fence, an' put in more posts, an' made er good square fence, he'd er been 'nuff sight better off. He wouldn't er lost er good hoss an' wagon, an' he wouldn't er had ter go limpin' reound all the rest uv his life. When er chap gits caught in what ain't fair, he hes ter dew er considerable limpin' arterwards, I

reckon," said Jotham, who was apt to deliver his ideas as his brain furnished them, in happy ignorance of all rules of grammar and rhetoric.

"Ef yer want ter get on in ther world," he continued, "an' keep on steady, yer better be honest, Seth Downin'."

"I know a man," replied Seth, "that is so green he lets every body else get ahead of him. No wonder he's always been behind another man's plough, and will be all his days."

"Yer' d— ruther— be— under— ther— harrer— fur stealin' his apples— I s'pose. Wall,— I— hadn't, but— there's no countin' fur tastes, I've hearn say," drawled Jotham.

Seth began to think he was in a hurry, and soon disappeared.

"What an interminable tongue that Jotham has got," he said as he walked along, "and a

verdant chap like that, undertake to tell a smart man how to get on in the world." He threw back his head and laughed one of his loud laughs.

"No use ter waste breath tellin' on him what he orter dew," said Jotham; "he's sure to go crooked somehow."

All Seth's industry, perseverance, intellect and patience, he determined should be brought to bear on one object, the gaining of the knowledge necessary to fit him to take his place at the bar. With little hope of success in that direction, yet resolute to leave no means untried, he concluded to ask his father for funds to enable him to commence preparation for college, but he was met with the usual complaints of heavy expenses and business losses. Seth well knew that it was useless to urge his request, but patiently waited for an opening which he might enter. He became a constant attendant upon the court

when it was in session at Shiretown, and was soon well known by the lawyers who habitually practised there, ingratiating himself by persistent attentions, running errands for them, carrying their bags, and occasionally even finding references for them. Thus he picked up many law terms and phrases. A small beginning, but still, a beginning; he was yet young and could afford to make slow progress.

In one of his visits to Shiretown, he had learned that Mr. Wales, senior member of the firm of Wales and Clark, wished to be relieved of some of his business cares, and that the firm would take a partner. He lost no time in repeating the intelligence to his father, who received it grumblingly, but went the next day to call upon them.

He found Seth's statement to be correct, and made a proposition to the partners, which they agreed to take into consideration, but

first asked why he wished to leave Clifton. Mr. Downing replied that he was desirous of getting into business in a larger place and among more liberal minded people. The partners had heard reports derogatory to him, but thought they might be without foundation; and even if the hints thrown out had foundation, his evident knowledge of business would make him an acquisition to them, while as junior partner, he would be under restraint.

Their conference resulted in the decision to admit Mr. Downing into the firm, and it was in order to make up the stipulated capital that he had urged the discharge of Deacon Goodwin's indebtedness. The family removed to Shiretown, and Seth felt that he had taken one step towards his object. He applied to Mr. Murdock for the position of office-boy, and offered to give his services for the use of the lawyer's books and an occasional direction about his reading. Mr. Righter had been

clerk for Mr. Murdock, senior, and held the same place now that the son had taken possession. Constant and faithful in his long-continued attention to office routine, old age was creeping upon him, and Mr. Murdock was not unwilling to receive so cheap an assistant in daily drudgery, especially as he knew that Seth was a good and rapid penman.

Seth had taken another step. He entered the office determined to serve his employer with all his powers and make himself indispensable there. He worked cheerfully and diligently on the tedious documents given him to copy, and was on the alert at all times. At every leisure moment he poured over one or other of the calf-bound books, which, with the exception of the daily newspaper, were the only office literature.

Three months passed in this way, when one day, on going home to dinner, he heard the complaints which were familiar to the ears of all the Downing family.

"There's that mortgage of Deacon Goodwin's," Mr. Downing concluded, "I've asked him for it time and time again. I can't afford to lose it."

Such representations were so common that they would have made no impression on the mind of the son, had not Josiah Goodwin stepped into the office a few moments after his own return, and asked for Mr. Murdock.

"He is not in," said Mr. Righter. "He will be here in the course of an hour."

"Father wants him to see to that," said Josiah. "Mr. Downing is coming in to see him about it." And he laid a paper on the clerk's desk, and went directly out.

At the same moment, the door on the opposite side of the room opened, a lawyer whose office was in the same building, thrust in his head and said, "Just come and witness this paper for me, will you, Righter?"

It was Mr. Righter's custom, whenever any

letter or paper was left in Mr. Murdock's absence, to place it in a certain pigeon-hole in his desk, and when that gentleman returned, the contents of the pigeon-hole, be they more or less, were handed to him. The old clerk depended more upon his methodical habits, than upon his failing memory; but upon this occasion he was confused by the double call on his attention, for when one thought had possession of Mr. Righter's brain, another could not gain a lodgment, unless the first moved on and made way. He descended from his high office-stool, and hastily obeyed the summons, leaving Deacon Goodwin's papers lying on the desk.

"Ah," thought Seth, "the governor thinks he's mighty sharp. I don't believe but Uncle David has paid that mortgage, and he wants to make it out he hasn't. I'm as smart as he is any day. We'll see about that." He leaned over and took the paper from Mr.

Righter's desk. Seth never acknowledged his relationship to his parent when he spoke of him, or to him, but always called him governor, old man, or by some like respectful title.

He opened the paper; out fell the note that the boy's father afterwards showed Deacon Goodwin. As it fluttered to the floor, a step was on the stairway. Seth had barely time to secure the smaller paper, and thrust it with the larger one, open, into his desk; when Mr. Murdock entered, he was intent upon a volume of law reports.

In another moment Mr. Righter returned, looked among the papers on his desk, and in his desk, fidgeted in his seat, and at last, in answer to Mr. Murdock's question, "Any thing for me, Mr. Righter?" handed him a letter only.

An hour passed. Mr. Murdock sat turning over a written document belonging to a case

on which he was retained, arranging an argument in his mind. "I wonder if he is ever going home?" thought Seth; "he's always off before this time. Isn't Righter ever going to get that copy done?"

Scratch, scratch, scratch went the clerk's pen.

"I'll do the rest of that copy for you, Mr. Righter," he said aloud.

"No, thank you," was the reply. "I don't like to see two hands on one page."

Scratch, scratch still.

"The old prig," was Seth's mental comment. "If he'd only give me a chance to slip this mortgage into his desk, among his papers, I'd be all right; he'd think he'd overlooked it."

But no chance was given him. The clerk finished his copying, took his hat from the peg over his desk, brushed it with his elbow with the air of a man who was trying to re-

call a straying thought, put it firmly on his head, and vanished.

Mr. Murdock sat absorbed in his incipient argument, and Seth sat apparently absorbed in "Reports of Marine Cases," but really debating with himself whether he should venture to go to Mr. Righter's desk, whether he could place the paper there without attracting Mr. Murdock's attention; but the lawyer's eyes were sharp, his ears keen, and Seth well knew what would be the consequences, were he detected in meddling with aught intended for his principal.

The perplexed boy was about to open his desk, in order to fold the paper and tuck it under the collection of scraps, memoranda, and rejected copy; but at that moment Mr. Murdock turned round, and looking through the door between the inner and outer office, said, "You there, Downing? You need not wait for me. I will lock the door to-night."

"Hadn't I better stop and take the keys so I can sweep out in the morning?"

"No, you can stop at my house for them as you go by," replied Mr. Murdock, coming to a book case directly behind Seth's stool, where he stood taking down volume after volume, reading a page in one, a sentence in another, and looking at the table of contents of a third.

Still Seth lingered until Mr. Murdock said tartly, "I don't wish you to wait, Downing." He dared not disobey, but was he to go and leave that deed spread open, within a few feet of Mr. Murdock's hand? What if his employer should open the desk, as he often did. It was not considered private property, but his desk and Mr. Righter's were simply receptacles of business papers, and Mr. Murdock felt at liberty to open either in the absence of clerk, or student. Seth appropriated the latter title. But there was no gainsaying the

lawyer's order, and the boy left the office bitterly reproaching himself.

"What a fool I was to stick my nose in at all. I could have found out all I wanted to know some other way. Now if I'm caught, it 'll be no kind of use to say I didn't mean to pocket it, and it 'll be all up with me there. It's all 'the old man's' fault, too; if he hadn't lied about it, I shouldn't be in this scrape."

He started for the office in the morning, earlier than usual, stopped at Mr. Murdock's house for the keys, but was told that he had already left home. With quick, beating heart he hastened on to find the door of the lawyer's room nearly closed, and Mr. Righter standing beside his employer's chair, both the men examining a paper closely resembling in size, color, etc., the one that cost the boy so much anxiety within the last eighteen hours. He heard Mr. Murdock say as he folded it and

placed it in a drawer, "It is well that we have it now, but I must look into this; it must not happen again." Mr. Righter came out and went to his desk. Mr. Murdock called Seth, gave him a handful of letters, and asked him to put them in the post-office at once.

"That's to get rid of me so he can talk it over with Righter," he thought, as he went into the street. "What was he to do now? He had just got things in train, his prospect of getting on was fair, and now all was spoilt, all his plans overturned. Murdock would not let him stay in the office another day. But could he do anything more than dismiss him? Might he not make more serious trouble? Perhaps it would be best not to go back to be turned out. But what then? He could not leave the town. No, he might as well go back and take the consequences. There was nothing else to do after all; he should not help anything by being frightened."

The distance he had to walk was short, but thoughts came rapidly under the stimulus of fear. In those few moments Seth suffered much, and we could have pitied him, had not all his distress been utterly selfish; all caused by the fear that his plans for individual aggrandizement might come to nought. Not a thought of the disgrace and sorrow he might bring on others; not a shadow of the shame which detection in a dishonorable act brings to many who have no shame for the act itself. No, we have no pity for the boy as he slowly ascends the stairs, his mind made up "to take what comes," and thinking what he shall say, and how he shall act, that the blow may fall as lightly as possible.

Neither do we enter into his joy as he raises the lid which he dared not lift last night, and sees the dreaded, the hateful paper safe. Ah! but was it safe? Had it not been placed there in his absence? Had he not been de-

spatched on the errand so the trap might be set for him? Perhaps Mr. Murdock found it last evening, and after consulting with Mr. Righter, replaced it, intending to watch the course of the purloiner.

Seth was as much perplexed as ever. Should he produce the paper, acknowledge his error, and explain the temptation? If Mr. Murdock had really detected him, that was the best course to pursue; the only one which afforded the least possibility of escape from the dreaded consequences. If he had not made the discovery, and the paper had remained undisturbed, what a blunder to be the first to call attention to it.

"Better wait a while, and see if I can't find out something more." So, as usual, Seth decided against the straight forward course, and before the morning had passed, congratulated himself on having done so.

Mr. Righter's desk was in perfect order;

not a speck of dust was allowed a residence there. In every pigeon-hole, every drawer, the papers, pens, pencils, all were placed in exactly straight lines. In the body of the desk itself were packages of papers, each tied up with three turns of red tape. Though the condition of perfect neatness was constantly existent, yet it was the old gentleman's custom, at stated intervals, to go through a process he called putting his desk in order. If the ceremony was commenced, it must be concluded before the methodical man could give his attention to other matters. If unexpected business came in, though Mr. Righter never refused to attend to it, when he did, his distress was so evident, that Mr. Murdock rarely required the sacrifice. Though annoyed at this, and other foibles of his clerk, he had so sincere a respect for his father's right-hand man, and such confidence in his integrity, that he cheerfully bore with him.

On this day, Mr. Murdock was especially anxious to dispose of all minor matters before the session of the circuit court, which was to commence next week. He took his newspaper, hastily glanced over the contents, then turned to speak to Mr. Righter; but he was already absorbed in the putting in order process.

"Why, Righter, that neat desk of yours was set to rights last week."

"Last week. Was it, Mr. Cornelius?" the old clerk asked, in an absent tone.

Mr. Murdock gave up the hope of recalling him to ordinary work, for an hour at least, and summoned Seth to his aid. He was so quick of apprehension, and so ready to execute, Mr. Righter's services were hardly missed; and Mr. Murdock was more than ever convinced of the valuable qualities of his office boy.

Mr. Righter opened bundle after bundle,

turned over and examined every paper, rearranged them, and tied them up in just as good order, but no better than they were before. He overturned drawer after drawer, to replace its contents just as they had been previous to the somersault. The putting to order was a much longer process than usual, and did not appear to produce the content that had always followed in time past.

Seth well knew the meaning of this uneasiness, but it brought him some relief. As he saw paper after paper taken up, and the memorandum on the back carefully read, he was more and more persuaded that the search was for the document that now lay snugly folded and concealed in his own desk.

The fear of immediate detection was entirely removed, when Mr. Murdock gave him a manuscript report, and asked him to make some extracts from it, saying that it was mailed a week before, and must have re-

mained at the Shiretown office two or three days after it should have been delivered.

"It is quite important," he continued, "and there might have been a serious loss if it had been delayed a little longer. When the mail comes in, I will go over for the letters, and speak to the post-master."

"I don't see how it is," said Mr. Righter, as soon as Mr. Murdock closed the door. "I thought Josiah Goodwin brought something for Mr. Murdock, yesterday."

"Did he?" said Seth, feigning surprise; "if he did, you gave it to Mr. Murdock of course."

"No, it want with the other things for him."

"If he brought it, you will come across it."

"No, I've been over every paper in my desk, and it is not there."

"To be sure you have," thought the boy,

"and how am I ever going to get it back now."

"You're sure he didn't bring any thing yesterday while you was here," asked the puzzled clerk. "I couldn't have dreamed it."

"No, I ain't sure. I don't know as I should know Josiah Goodwin now, I haven't seen him for so long. They say he is getting into bad company. I can't afford to have much to do with such young men. I've got to make my own way in the world."

The latter part of this speech was for the edification of Mr. Murdock, who was coming up stairs. "That is right, Downing. Always remember that if you are to be anybody in the world, you must avoid the company of the idle and dissipated," said the lawyer, as he passed into his private office.

CHAPTER XIII.

SETH watched for a chance to return the paper, to place it where it might appear to have been mislaid. He was in constant terror of detection, listening to every footfall, expecting to recognise that of his father coming to fulfil his promise to Josiah. In trying to devise some way out of his entanglement, he could think of none that did not threaten exposure as well as promise relief.

Mr. Righter continued his search in his uncertain half-dozed way, ransacking one part of the office at one time, and another at another, till not an inch was left unexplored, and Mr. Murdock's patience was well nigh exhausted.

"Poor Righter," he said to Mrs. Murdock, "I don't know but I shall be obliged to pension him off. I am afraid it would almost kill the old man, but he acts strangely lately, seems all in a mist, and Downing is running down too; he is not near as quick as he was at first."

In this way a week passed. Mr. Downing did not come to discharge his obligation; prompt when his own interests were at stake, he was careless when others might suffer by his neglect.

Seth carried the mortgage in his pocket; it was a leaden weight; nothing more nor less to him than all his prospects for life in that folded paper. But he dared not leave it in his desk, lest "that old mouser, Righter," should find it. He dared not leave it at home lest he should lose the watched-for opportunity to get it off his hands. He sauntered into the store in the evening just a week

after he had assumed the burden, and was startled by hearing Josiah Goodwin's name. A group of men were in earnest conversation, and Josiah Goodwin was the subject of their remarks. Seth dared not venture near enough to hear all they said, but he learned that Deacon Goodwin's son had left home unexpectedly and for some unknown reason. The thought at once flashed into his mind that his way of escape was before him.

He waited till his father was ready to leave for home, and went with him, quite to the parent's surprise, for Mr. Downing and his son were seldom seen in the streets of Shiretown together.

"What is that they were saying about Josiah Goodwin?" asked Seth.

"Oh, I didn't mind. He's run away; got into some rascally scrape or other, I suppose;" then came the threadbare sneer about minister's sons and deacon's daughters.

"I say, governor, when are you coming to see about that deed?"

"What deed?"

"You know well enough. The mortgage Josiah Goodwin brought in last week."

"I don't know. I'll come in soon. I'm busy now. Has Mr. Murdock said any thing about it?"

"No. Do you suppose Josiah will come back?"

"I can't tell. How should I know any thing about it?"

Seth stopped under a street-lamp, opened his coat, and drew a paper half-way out of his breast pocket, held it long enough for his father to read, "Mortgage Deed from David Goodwin ——" thrust it back, when Mr. Downing tried to seize it, and then buttoned up his coat.

"Where did you get that?" his father asked eagerly.

"Oh, I got it, and Mr. Murdock don't know any thing about it; don't know as he ever been in the office."

"Have you got the note, too?"

"Yes, I've got the note, and you needn't be in a hurry to come and see Murdock, because he don't know as it's been paid."

The two walked on in silence, and entered the house together. Seth was relieved in one particular; there was no danger that his father would be the first to bring his sin to light. If it was discovered, he would very probably denounce his son; but he was on his guard, and would not betray him without an inducement.

Mr. Downing's greed for gold, his desire for gain, honest or dishonest, "got into his eyes," as Jotham had said to Seth. The gain was magnified a thousand fold; the chance of exposure, and the probable consequences, diminished or receded.

"There are two thousand dollars I might have just as well as not, if I only knew that boy wouldn't come home. Suppose he should; who's going to believe him, when I've got all the papers? The old deacon won't live long, then I can come in, if Josiah don't come; if he does, and there's a fuss about it, I can give up the papers, and say he was drunk when he paid me;" and he concluded to ask Seth for the coveted documents.

"Seth, I can take better care of those papers than you can. I'll take them and put them into the safe."

With pretended reluctance Seth delivered up the mortgage, the note being inside. Mr. Downing carefully laid them in his private drawer in the safe, turned the key on them, and put the bunch of keys in his pocket.

Seth went into the office and found Mr. Righter alone there, prying about in the half-bewildered manner that had so increased upon the old man of late.

"They say Josiah Goodwin has gone away," he began.

"Yes, I heard something of the kind; he is a poor lot; we can spare him."

"Wan't you here when he brought something for Mr. Murdock? I can't remember just clearly about it."

"I guess you can't. You've asked me that question a dozen times before. Why, Righter, you must have been dreaming. Josiah Goodwin hasn't been in this office, to my knowledge, since I've been here."

"Well, I don't know; perhaps I did dream about it. If he'd brought any thing in, I should have put it right there in my desk, where I always put Mr. Murdock's things."

"Of course you would. You've had a dream about Josiah Goodwin, depend upon it."

"Well, may be I have."

Seth was relieved; the evidence of his guilt

was not a constant care; it was in another's keeping, and the danger was not his alone.

Mr. Righter gave up his fruitless search, and settled back into his old routine. Above all, Josiah Goodwin did not return.

"How is Mr. Righter getting along?" Mrs. Murdock inquired of her husband, a few days after Seth had transferred so large a portion of his burden to the paternal shoulders.

"He is doing much better. He is a reliable old man; if he had been more efficient, he would not have been my father's clerk and mine all these years; that would have been our loss. Downing, too, seems to have recovered his quick wits."

So all went smoothly again at Mr. Murdock's office.

Meanwhile Mr. Downing had been to Boston to buy goods, and encountered Josiah Goodwin, in the garb of a sailor, on one of

the wharves. He dogged the young man's footsteps till he saw him go on board a large clipper ship, then asked who the owners were, and managed to obtain from them that no such name was on the register; ascertained the time set for sailing, and was down on the wharf to see the clipper towed down the harbor with Deacon Goodwin's son on board. Josiah had shipped before the mast under a feigned name.

This information Mr. Downing did not bear to the sorrow stricken parents; it was kept for his own use. He carefully watched the ship news, saw the report of the arrival of the "Winged Keel" in one harbor, later in another. Then for months there were no tidings; next short paragraphs appeared, expressing the fear that the "Winged Keel" had gone to the bottom.

"And the deacon's son with her; that's about the right place for him," was Mr. Downing's reflection.

Finally the "Winged Keel" was given up; it was months since she had been due at an East Indian port and nothing had been heard of her; she was probably a total wreck and all on board lost.

"Now," thought Mr. Downing, "if the old deacon would die, I should be all right."

But the hale old man had no thought of departing from the world to give the unprincipled schemer an opportunity for further wrong doing; he lived on in ignorance of the plots against him.

The papers lay in the safe drawer; to the owner of the drawer so much idle capital. He never saw them without regretting, that he dared not put them to a good use. "A good use!" Ah, yes, Mr. Downing, they shall be put to a good use.

Again the greed for gain blinded him, and suddenly, without consulting Seth, he determined "to realize on the property."

"I'll sell that old man out before he knows what I'm about; then he may fight it out with the buyer."

"That's a pretty bold push, governor," said Seth, when the advertisement appeared in the county paper, "may be you can make it go, but if you had asked my advice, I should have told you to hold on a little longer. You'd better burn up the deed; it might be awkward for you and your dutiful son if it should come to light. Your signature is on the margin, you know."

"I'll look out for that."

Seth supposed his warning would be heeded, but his father thought the possession of the paper was another proof of his right to pursue the course he had started on, and meant to "look out" that the acknowledgment on the margin should not be visible, if the document itself was.

The result of the first auction, was quite

unexpected to him, and he would gladly have receded, but that would be a confession of weakness, and excite suspicion; he must go on; hence his haste to conclude the bargain with Mins.

Occupied by the extra business of court week, Mr. Downing had not heard of the turn of affairs at the Goodwin homestead, or of the arrival of the stranger, who had been instrumental in bringing them about. Seth had been sent by Mr. Murdock, in the middle of the afternoon, to a neighboring town, and had not returned till after the adjournment of the court. His younger brother, who had been despatched to Clifton on a reconoissance, had reported the sale in progress. The confederates, father and son, each in the morning went to his occupation, sanguine that a troublesome affair was nearly disposed of.

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was late in the evening when Mr. Randolph joined the party of lawyers gathered in the small parlor of the Shiretown House. The judge received him with cordiality, and most of the other gentlemen had seen him in the afternoon at the court-house, though he was personally known to Mr. Winnot only.

Mr. Murdock eyed the new comer suspiciously, and said to the elderly gentleman at his elbow, "Rather an unusual mode of proceeding that you and your friend brought about this afternoon, was it not? A stretch of power, it strikes me, for a judge to interfere in that way."

"The case was somewhat unusual."

"I don't think it is well for a judge to be hasty."

"No, I don't, unless he has haste to meet. I don't like to see one man deal hastily with another, when he thinks he has him in his power. What would you have done in the premises?"

"I would have postponed the case. I would have examined it before giving a decision."

"And let a respectable, hard-working man be turned out of doors in his old age."

"Law is law."

"Yes, and justice is justice, and ought to be tempered with mercy."

"One man has rights as well as another," said Mr. Murdock.

"Certainly he has. The judge's decision was rather rapid, to be sure, but it was not final; the old gentleman now has time to

prove his rights, if he can, and Downing has time to prove his claim. The judge's course was just what my own would have been, if I had sat on the bench in his place."

"Downing's proof is perfectly good; and I don't like to see a stranger come in and obstruct the regular course of law in that way," said Mr. Murdock, who was very tenacious of his professional dignity.

"Ah, that is it, is it?" thought Mr. Winnot; "he is more plain spoken than civil," but he answered good-naturedly: "If there is any blame there, it belongs to me as much as to Mr. Randolph; but no matter; I'm not sorry yet that I helped him. He is coming this way; I will introduce you to him; he will do more to remove your unfavorable impressions in five minutes, than I can in an hour."

"I wonder if he expects to go back of the records," said Mr. Murdock.

"I don't know what he intends to do," was

Mr. Winnot's cool reply. "I would go back, or round, or over, or under the records, if I could, to put a stop to injustice."

Mr. Murdock, now thoroughly irritated, was making his way towards the door, willing to escape the introduction to Mr. Randolph; but he was stopped by a notorious bore, who never lacked question ready to ask. "Who was that young man I saw in your office, this morning? I thought I'd seen him before."

"You know my clerk, Righter; he is not a young man though."

"No, no. I know him. The young man. Don't you remember he brought you your letters from the post-office."

"That was my office boy, Downing."

"Oh, yes, I knew I had seen him before. Son of Downing, the shopkeeper, is not he?"

"Yes."

"Pretty smart boy, isn't he?"

As the bore was called by some of his legal

brethren, a walking interrogation mark. his questioning propensities were a standing joke, and the equanimity or the annoyance of his victims was often a subject of remark. Well aware of this, Mr. Murdock answered quietly, while he chafed inwardly, "Yes, he is a very smart boy; he has not been with me long, but he knows as much law now, as some young men do when they are admitted to the bar."

The bore released him; lookers on had nothing to laugh at, but the impatient man had not made his escape. It was Mr. Winnot who stopped him this time.

"It appears to me that I have heard of that Downing before. Was he not concerned in some affair at Clifton not quite to his credit?"

"Wonder if that is his business," thought Mr. Murdock, who liked far better to criticise than to have his own actions called in question; but he answered, "I believe there was

some gossip about him, some boyish folly, I suppose. I think he has got over that now. Boys will be boys, you know. I don't believe in remembering all the sins of youth against one; give him a chance, I say."

"Oh, yes, of course; still I have a good deal of faith in the old saying, 'The boy is father to the man;' not that I would pronounce the boy who pulls off a fly's wing, or tortures a defenceless kitten, a candidate for the gallows, though I think it betrays a contemptible trait of character. But in the matter of honesty, and if I remember right this was a matter of meum and tuum, the man will closely resemble the boy; if he deals unfairly by his teacher, schoolmates, and so on, he is almost sure to be a tricky, dishonest man. That is good doctrine, is not it, Randolph? Mr. Randolph, Mr. Murdock. Mr. Randolph has just returned from abroad. I don't know of any two men better fitted to

compare notes than you two," said Mr. Winnot, as he turned to look for the judge. Five minutes after he interrupted his conversation with that official to say, as he glanced smilingly across the room, "Murdock does not feel so crusty as he did. I thought Randolph would bring him round. Very good sort of a man, Mr. Murdock, if he would not be always taking care of his dignity; but he will get over that, I fancy."

"Oh, yes, I think so; and as for Randolph, I wish we could keep him this way; I have great confidence in his judgment. Have you seen the last digest of our State laws?" The judge never talked of court-room occurrences outside the court house walls.

Mr. Murdock, living in an inland town, seldom had an opportunity to recall his reminiscences of foreign travel, in conversation with one fresh from "merry England," and had indeed lost sight of his irritation. One

after another left the room without either of the two gentlemen, who were seated on the sofa in close conversation, noticing that they were in danger of being left in possession. The single stroke of the clock on the chimney piece arrested the attention of both.

"That can't be right," said Mr. Murdock, rising and looking at his watch. "Even so. I have lost two hours of 'nature's sweet restorer,' Mr. Randolph, but they are two such hours as I have not spent this many a day. You are a stranger in our State, I believe. If it is in my power to do anything to make your stay agreeable, I should esteem it a favor if you would lay your commands upon me."

"I think it very probable I may trespass on your kindness."

"No trespass, I assure you, sir."

"I would be very glad to consult you on this affair of Deacon Goodwin's, but it is late this evening."

Mr. Murdock's brow contracted slightly, but he could not recede.

"Come over and breakfast with me. Mrs. Murdock is absent, and we can talk business, over our chops and coffee."

"Nothing could suit me better."

Mr. Murdock understood the duties of host, and made his guest perfectly at ease, so that he had no difficulty in introducing the subject that engaged his thoughts.

"You are acquainted with Deacon Goodwin, Mr. Murdock?"

"Yes, slightly; my father knew him very well, but my acquaintance is a strictly professional one. Those quiet Clifton farmers don't make much business for us. I had not seen him for a long time till he came in a week or two since to ask about this mortgage. It is hard for the old gentleman to suffer for young scape-graces' exploits, but it is the old story, the innocent for the guilty; the same

thing is happening every day in different ways. It was annoying to me to be called upon for a document that was never deposited with me."

"I suppose Downing's interest could be bought."

"He has sold it already, that is, he has agreed to sell it; the papers were to be signed at my office to-day; your success yesterday may delay the transfer."

"I was just in time."

"Not a day to spare."

"I must secure that claim."

"It is not at all improbable that the purchaser would transfer this bargain for a consideration. It is a money-making affair on his part. I presume he buys the place far below its value."

"Then the best way is to negotiate with him before going to the mortgagee."

"Decidedly; and if you will allow me to

advise, I will say that Mr. Downing has the reputation of being a passionate man — "

"Yes, I see. He might not be able to accommodate the man who had interfered in his transactions."

"You have it, sir."

"This purchaser. Who is he?"

"His name is Mins; he is a rough sort of a man, and if he will not take one sum he will another; money is more of an object to him than it is to you, I opine."

"He is to be at your office this morning."

"Yes, he has some business to look after there; when that is finished I am to send for Mr. Downing. Why not walk over with me? I can offer you an arm-chair and a newspaper, and you will excuse my attending to business, I know."

"Of course."

Ten minutes later Mr. Randolph sat in Mr. Murdock's private office, newspaper in hand,

occupied one moment with moving accidents by flood and field, another by studies in physiognomy. Seth Downing's eyes, nose and mouth were being under consideration. He longed to take the boy by the throat, and by the use of good, strong muscle, force from him the knowledge which the investigator was almost sure was in Seth's possession. But Mr. Randolph had a clue, one that would break perhaps as soon as he attempted to follow it; still the line of procedure was decided upon, and it would not answer to risk any short cuts, any "breach of the peace."

When Mins appeared, Mr. Murdock despatched Seth to the court house.

"I shall be detained a short time, Downing," said he, "and I would like to have you remain till I come, and give particular attention to the case on trial, so as to report it to me."

"So your governor didn't make that trade

quite so smooth as he thought he was going to; haste makes waste sometimes," were the first words that Seth heard as he passed between the posts in front of the court house.

"What trade?"

"What trade, sweet innocent?"

The speaker, stimulated by an old grudge, was delighted to narrate the occurrences of the previous afternoon, and finished his recital by saying, "And Evans went right over with the man that came in the cars, and they say the old deacon is back again, snug in his house, and I guess it 'ill be a job to oust him. Better tell your governor, not to be in such a hurry next time, because folks don't like to see a clever old man tipped out that way."

"Tain't my job," said Seth. "I told the governor 'twas too bad, but he knows a great sight more law than I do. Thinks he does, at any rate"

He went into the court room, not at first to watch the trial, but to consider what his own course should be; whether he should slip out and warn his father, or trust to his hearing the news by a chance informant.

"The old man has got himself into the scrape, and he may get himself out of it," he said to himself; and he turned his attention, as well as his fears would allow, to testimony and evidence.

CHAPTER XV.

TINS, determined not to trust Mr. Downing's word, had been early that morning to see if the conditions of the sale had been fulfilled. Instead of finding the dwelling he expected to move into, tenantless, he saw the same aged couple that had occupied it when he was last there. No indications of change were visible, save the trampled grass and a slight appearance of disorder about the house. He remembered Jaques' warning, and almost wished he had heeded it. It was plain that Downing could not, or would not fulfil his agreement. When he reached Shiretown he learned what obstacles

had been placed in the willing mortgagee's way.

"I shan't take those papers of Downing's to-day," were his first words when the office door closed behind Seth. "He promised to see that the place was vacated, and he hasn't done it, and they say he can't do it for six months; he's got to make me a consideration if I wait that time."

"Why don't you give up the bargain?" asked Mr. Murdock.

"Well, between you and I, I would, but it's a mighty good one, I think."

"Perhaps you could get some one to take it off your hands for a reasonable consideration."

"I don't think I should be hard to trade with. I'd give up my chance for — say — five hundred dollars."

"That would be doing pretty well, wouldn't it; five hundred dollars for a bargain of two thousand?"

"Yes; but it is a four or five thousand dollar farm for twenty-two hundred."

"Is the title good?" interposed Mr. Randolph.

"The lawyer here says it is; he ought tc know;" answered Mins, looking towards Mr Murdock.

"I consider it perfectly good. The land has had so few owners the title is very plain; the records are clear," said the lawyer.

"I will take Mr. Murdock's word for the records, and I will give five hundred dollars for your bargain if you will first satisfy me that the mortgagee has a right to sell," said Mr. Randolph.

"To be sure he has. There was some talk about a runaway boy, but that is nothing that touches the title."

"I am a little precise about such matters, I believe," said Mr. Randolph, "and I would like to see Mr. Downing's proofs, the ones he

has in his own hands, of his right to sell. If I am satisfied with them I will close the bargain."

"When?"

"This morning, if you choose. If you and Mr. Murdock will go with me to Downing, and you will say that you wish to see the papers, the note, and mortgage securing the note, allowing me to be a looker on, if he produces papers satisfactory to Mr. Murdock, your attorney, I will at once pay the five hundred dollars."

"When'll you go?"

"Now, if Mr. Murdock is at leisure."

Mr. Murdock was not pleased, but as he had no valid objection to offer, could not refuse. He went with Mins and Mr. Randolph, thinking that the latter was much more agreeable as a man of society than as a man of business.

When half-way down the stairs, Mins

stopped, turned about, and spoke to Mr. Murdock.

"I don't know about this; he can't get me into any scrape, can he?"

"I do not see that you take any risk," was the answer.

The color forsook Mr. Downing's cheek, when he saw the three men step up on to the long stoop in front of the store.

"What had Mins come here for, and with his lawyer, too? That other man; who was he?"

Again he fervently wished this job well off his hands, but he must put a bold face on it; he was in for it now, and every thing might depend upon his coolness. Mins walked directly up and accosted him: "I thought I'd like to have Mr. Murdock take a look at them papers before I took the deed."

"Good morning, Mr. Mins; good morning, Mr. Murdock," said Mr. Downing, and he

added a ceremonious bow to the stranger. "I hope you are quite well to-day. What papers was it you would like to see?"

"Why, the papers about that farm I was going to buy, you know. The note and mortgage."

"Well, I can show you the note. I am not sure that I have the mortgage. I will get the note however."

Downing went to the small room where the safe stood, intending to bring the note, but Mins closely followed him; Mr. Randolph and Mr. Murdock brought up the rear. Mr. Murdock stood in the doorway, while Mr. Downing unlocked the drawer, and took out the small slip of paper. He handed it, without saying a word, to the lawyer, who turned it over and carefully inspected it, saying "Yes, all satisfactory. I know Deacon Goodwin's signature."

Mins never allowed a sense of delicacy to

interfere with a despatch of business; now he was impatient to hold the five hundred dollars between his fingers. Why should not he lend a helping hand? While Mr. Downing's back was turned, he rapidly ran over the documents in the drawer, till he came to the one labelled, "Mortgage Deed from David Goodwin to John J. Downing."

"Here 'tis," said he, reaching it over Mr Downing's shoulder to Mr. Randolph.

The guilty man turned quickly round, and tried to seize the deed.

"What right have you to meddle with my papers?" he cried.

"The right that every honest man has to bring a rogue to justice," Mr. Randolph answered.

"Now you see this won't do," said Mins, seizing Mr. Downing by the wrists, and forcing him back against the partition, powerless in the hands of the strong man.

"I can see no reason why you should object to my examining this paper, Mr. Downing," said Mr. Murdock, taking it from Mr. Randolph. He opened it and glanced at the margin.

It was now the lawyer's turn to be agitated. "My honor is at stake here," said he. "This paper is not yours, Mr. Downing; how came it in your possession?"

"What is it?" asked Mins.

"Here is the acknowledgment in the usual form of the payment of the note, and it is signed, 'John J. Downing.' This man has no more right, Mr. Mins, to sell Deacon Goodwin's property, than you have to sell mine. I ask you how you come by papers that belong to Deacon Goodwin, and not to you," Mr. Murdock demanded of the man who had sank trembling into a chair.

"I — I — the fact was, Josiah was drunk when he paid the money, and I thought I'd take care of the papers for the deacon."

"Mighty good care you took of them for him," said Mins.

"Were you drunk when you offered the place for sale?" asked Mr. Murdock. "I should think you might have been. I did not know you to be a man of intemperate habits."

"He wan't drunk when he tried to get twenty-two hundred dollars out of an honest man, for what was not worth a straw," said Mins.

"I wonder what his idea of honesty is," thought Mr. Randolph.

Completely bewildered and beside himself with terror, Mr. Downing made a feeble effort to escape.

"Not quite so fast," said Mr. Murdock. "I shall sift this matter to the bottom. I shall take measures at once to order your arrest."

"Oh, don't expose me, don't expose me," implored the agonized man. "I'll do any-

thing you say. I shouldn't have thought of it. I didn't do it."

"I suppose you didn't try to get twenty-two hundred dollars out of me. Who done that, if you didn't, I'd like to know.'

"You have not told me yet how these documents came into your hands," said Mr. Murdock.

"Don't expose me, sir," said Downing, in piteous tones, glancing out into the store and turning quickly from the eager looks that were bent upon him, "'twas all Seth's fault."

"Seth's fault, was it? I feared as much," said Mr. Murdock; "then this is more than ever my business."

Mr. Randolph could not help feeling a gleam of pity for the abject man before him, and a desire to shorten his sufferings, much like that we feel for a writhing, mangled snake. "We should be more quiet and less liable to observation, I think, Mr. Murdock," said he, "if we were to go to your office."

"I'll tell you all about it, sir, only don't expose me here."

"Come along, then," said Mins, taking him roughly by the arm and drawing him toward the front door of the store.

"There's a door this way," said Downing, looking pleadingly at Mr. Randolph.

No wonder he shrank from facing partners, clerks and customers.

"Where's your hat?" asked Mins. Downing pointed to it.

"Just you get it, will you," said Mins. "I ain't a going to let go this chap in a hurry; try to swindle an honest man out of twenty-two hundred dollars. That the right one?" and he took the hat from Mr. Randolph, crushed it down over the culprit's eyes, and dragged him out of the small back door.

Mr. Righter looked up in astonishment when Downing entered the office, Mins leading or rather pushing him, Mr. Murdock and Mr. Randolph following.

"Righter, won't you go over to the court house and tell Downing I want him. You can stay and take notes of the trial in his place.

"Now, Mr. Randolph, as I am a party to a limited extent in this case, you will oblige me by putting such questions to the culprit as you may wish."

"Very well, if that is your choice. Mr. Downing, will you answer the question that has already been put to you, how came you to retain those papers after the mortgagor's obligation was discharged?"

"I didn't retain them," replied Mr. Downing, rocking from side to side in his chair. "Josiah Goodwin took them over to Mr. Murdock's office."

"How did you procure them from there?"

"I didn't, I didn't! 'Twas Seth; he got them from the office."

Mr. Murdock winced, and the vision of the

white-haired, man whom he had treated with so little ceremony, was before him.

"Seth, that is your son?"

"Yes."

"Shall we wait, and let him speak for himself?" asked Mr. Randolph, turning to Mr. Murdock.

"He will be here soon," was the reply of the thoroughly humbled lawyer.

Ten long, long minutes, they waited before Seth's footstep was heard on the stairs; he came up two steps at a time, opened the door hastily, approached Mr. Murdock's chair, and offered him a roll of note paper, saying, "I should have come before, but I thought I'd hear the witness through. I thought you'd want the whole testimony."

Mr. Murdoek motioned him aside, saying. "I will attend to that some other time. Answer whatever questions this gentleman may put to you."

Seth turned round, glanced at his father with an expression of contempt, understood at once, that his guilt had been brought to light, and uttered a low whistle, which he followed with, "What's up now? What's the matter with the governor?"

"Now, Mr. Downing," said Mr. Randolph, "will you tell us how these papers came into your possession, after you had delivered them to Deacon Goodwin's messenger."

"Who said he ever did deliver them," demanded Seth; and he strode across the room, shook his father by the shoulder, and shouted in his ear, "Wake up, I say, old man; what do you let people bully you for?"

"Young man," interposed Mr. Randolph, "if you do not wish us to call in the strong arm of the law, behave with some degree of propriety."

"Who are you, I'd like to know?"

"I am David Goodwin's counsel. That is enough for the present."

"Downing, sit down in that chair, and answer when you are called upon," said Mr. Murdock. "I can have some pity for your father, if his oldest son cannot."

"I haven't any pity for him," Mins interrupted. "Try to get twenty-two hundred dollars out of an honest man."

"Did you ever hear of partakers and thieves, Mr. Mins?" asked Mr. Randolph.

"If you are innocent," Mr. Murdock continued, without noticing the interruption, "I will protect you; if not, it is my duty to place you where you will receive the reward of your deeds. Sit down in that chair."

Seth swung himself into the seat indicated, and did his best to retain a bold, unconcerned air; if his prospects of advancment in that office had come to nought, there was no use in standing off and being ceremonious now; but he would not be crowded more than he could help.

Mr. Randolph repeated his question to Mr. Downing. "How came you in possession of those papers?"

"Seth brought them from the office."

"Where Josiah left them?"

"Yes, with Righter, one day when Mr. Murdock was out. I should not have been in this trouble, if it hadn't been for Seth."

"Now see here, old man," said the son, "it's no use talking that way, 'I shouldn't have been in this scrape if it hadn't been for Seth.' If you'd done as Seth told you you wouldn't have been in this trouble. You was glad enough when you found Seth had the documents, and Josiah was gone, and you thought you wouldn't be found out. If you'd had a little spunk you needn't have got into this scrape. What did you want to own right up for? Why couldn't you look up saucy and say Josiah never paid the money? It's no use trying to do any thing with you.

"Here, Mr. —— I don't know what you call yourself," Seth went on addressing Mr. Randolph, "I'll tell you just how it was. I can't stay here all day this way, and you won't get it out of him before night. You see, the old man was pleading poverty one day, same as he always is, and groaning about Uncle David's mortgage, saying he couldn't get it, and all that. Well, that very afternoon, Josiah Goodwin comes into the office and gives Righter a paper for Murdock, and the same minute a man comes and calls Righter out. Now you see, Righter is a regular prig, and I never knew him to go and leave a paper out of place before or since, but he did that time, and I thought I'd just see what the governor was about; so I was just looking at the paper when Murdock came along, and I couldn't do any thing but clap it into my desk. Murdock locked up that night, and I couldn't get a chance to put the paper back. It seemed as if those two men

had agreed to mount guard over me. I couldn't get any chance to get rid of that mortgage unless I'd owned right up I'd taken it, and I couldn't do that, you know."

"No, I don't know any thing of the kind," said Mr. Randolph. "If you had acknowledged your first wrong step, you would have saved yourself and others much trouble."

"Well, I didn't any way, and after Josiah Goodwin went off, I showed 'em to the old man, and he wanted 'em, and I let him have 'em. I told him after he'd started to sell the place he'd better burn up the mortgage, but he didn't do it, and now he knows whether I was right or not. He's got me into a pretty scrape too, and I ain't much to blame either.

"Don't you see, if things hadn't been just as they were, I shouldn't have this job on my hands? If the old man hadn't tried to throw dust into my eyes, and if Righter hadn't left things laying round, and wasn't such a moon-

struck fellow, and if Josiah hadn't left the note in and then gone off, I shouldn't have done it."

"I see," said Mr. Randolph, "that there never was a rascal yet, who did not find wickedness ready for his hand, and excuses ready for his tongue;" — he was about to add, "I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf;" but remembering that all such allusions would be lost on Seth, he turned to the father and asked, "Is that account correct?"

"I think so," was the reply.

"Oh, yes, that is correct," said Seth. "You're lawyer enough to know, I suppose, that when a man gets into a bad scrape, he stands the best chance, to make a clean breast of it."

"We will dispense with your legal opinions, Downing," said Mr. Murdock.

"I believe you won't care to close your bargain with Mr. Downing, Mr. Mins," said Mr. Randolph.

"I wash my hands of it," said Mins, who had been looking uneasily towards the door since Mr. Randolph's hint about partakers and thieves.

"I don't suppose you want me any more."

"No, I think not," said Mr. Murdock, "but you will oblige me if you will stop at the court house, and ask Sheriff Evans to come over here, and bring a man he can trust with him."

"Certainly," said Mins, "very happy to; and he made his escape, though not till he had delivered his final decision to Mr. Downing in this form.

"You 'll find Shiretown, too hot to hold *you*, depend on that."

The sheriff soon appeared, and with him a broad shouldered man, in whose grasp Seth had more than once seen a helpless prisoner.

"Take young Downing into custody, Slater," said Mr. Murdock, and turning to the

sheriff, he added, "He will remain in your hands, until he can be brought to trial."

Seth well knew that active resistance would be utterly useless, and only lead to exposure and closer watching. Slater looked upon his employment as one in which high art might be displayed, and was wont to say, "When the pris'ner goes 'long stiddy, why then I go 'long stiddy. I keeps my eye on him putty tight though, but there ain't no use layin' out all your strength when you ain't got nothin' but a leetle go-cart to trundle; better hold back your reserve forces till you need 'em."

Seth had been present when Slater's reserved force had been called into action, and knew his own interest far better than to cause it to be needed now; so he walked beside the officer, talking of some casual topic, but all the while speculating whether the wits he placed so much confidence in would not help him now. The two reached the county

without exciting the curiosity of the few who met Sheriff Evans's deputy in company with a lawyer's office-boy.

The son disposed of, Mr. Murdock turned to the father and said, "You will go to the recorder's with the sheriff, who will see your acknowledgment properly recorded and certified."

He handed the officer the mortgage, explained briefly the state of the case, and concluded by saying, "When the business is finished, you will place the man in confinement, and return the document to Mr. Randolph, the mortgagor's agent."

Mr. Downing had sat silent, aware that the chains were being secured about him, and that he was utterly powerless to cast them off. Now, however, he gathered himself up for a final effort, and said, "You ain't going to take me away from my family, without giving me a chance to see them once; do remember, sir, I am a husband and father."

"I can send a man home with Mr. Down ing," said Sheriff Evans, sincerely pitying the wretched supplicant.

"If we can make the burden lighter for his wife and children, I should be glad to do it, so far as I am concerned; and I am sure Deacon Goodwin would," said Mr. Randolph.

"Very well; then, Evans," said Mr. Murdock, "please to attend to the business as I requested, and we shall hold you responsible for the prisoner."

Evans' regular force was not large, and when extra demands were made upon him, he was obliged to call in assistants, unaccustomed to deal with men whose faculties were all called into play by the desire for self-preservation. It was not strange that prisoners sometimes eluded the vigilance of these unpractised officers, and made their escape.

The weather, which had been warm and

pleasant, changed in the night; the vane veered round from west to north-east, and a cheerless storm set in. One of the storms, that in spring and fall so often chill, to the very marrow of the bones, the dwellers in our treacherous climate.

The night was dark, and the biting wind rattled the casement and dashed the rain in Mr. Downing's face, as he swung himself down from a second-story window, and groped his way toward the railroad-station, where he stood cowering under a shed, waiting the coming of a freight train that stopped at Shiretown regularly, about two o'clock in the morning, to take in wood and water. When it came, he clambered into a gravel-car attached to the rear of the train, and curled down into one corner, wet and miserable.

The train soon began to move, and Mr. Downing thought that he was safe at least, till he should reach the next stopping place, but

before the engine was fairly under way, a hand was laid on the edge of the car. The fugitive drew himself up into as small a compass as possible to elude the supposed pursuer, but the new comer tumbled in, treading on the prostrate man in his hasty advent.

"Hullo! what's that?" he muttered.

The father recognised the voice as that of his eldest son, his partner in iniquity. "Is that you, Seth?"

"What, you there, governor. Well, that's droll we should both have taken passage in this luxurious vehicle."

"Keep still, can't you; somebody will hear you."

"No danger, the cars make such a racket. I say, governor, how'd you get away? That jail ain't fit to hold an enterprising baby, if it wanted to crawl out."

"I thought I'd got rid of you. I've suffered enough by you; this is the second time you've

broken up my business, and my home, by your villainy."

"Now see here, old man, you needn't be blackguarding me so. When I was a little shaver, didn't you tell me I must be smart and make money and get the better of folks. And didn't I use to help you mix up things after the store was shut, put sand into the sugar, and meal into mustard, and all that sort of thing. I was all right, this time; it's you that's broken up my business this time. It's you that's got found out; you'll have to learn to cover your own tracks better."

Ah! Seth, if you are ever well read in criminal law, well acquainted with its workings, you will learn that the precautions taken against detection, are, after all, only mile posts for the avenger. As the pioneer in the trackless forests, blazes his way, chipping a fragment from the bark of one tree and another, as he passes, that others may follow in his

footsteps, so does the malefactor, in his attempts at concealment, but leave guide-marks for the pursuer.

Exposed to the pelting storm, the father and son exchanged recriminations. We leave them, homeless wanderers. The middle aged man,

"Cover'd with cold and wrapt in wretchedness,"

all his painful savings, all the muck rake scrapings, all that he was possessed of, left behind; even the name that was his in helpless infancy he dares not take with him. The youth, verging on manhood, his prospects blighted, his plans overthrown, we leave him to burrow, mole eyed, in the tortuous ways of deceit and fraud. Had he started in the full sunlight of honesty and truth, he might have run, side by side, with the fleetest in the race of life.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Mr. Randolph had seen Mr. Downing and Seth safely, as he supposed, in the hands of the officers, he hastened to the depot to communicate with Mr. Bartlett.

Twenty minutes later, Carl and Emily were in their mother's dressing room helping to unpack the trunks, the front door closed noisily, and almost at the same moment their father came into the apartment holding in his hand a letter which he gave to his wife, but he spoke to his son, "Come, Carl, not a moment to spare; if you are wide awake you can take the express train."

Mrs. Bartlett read:

"SHIRETOWN SEPT. ——.

Despatch Carl by first train. Job 5. 12.

CARLETON RANDOLPH."

"What does Carl mean? But no matter for that now," said Mrs. Bartlett, "we will send you, and then we will see what the rest means. He wants you to come to him, that is clear."

Emily had found the text and cried, "I know it is something about Uncle David."

"Well well," said Mr. Bartlett, "don't stop to talk; get a bag, valise, the first you can lay your hand upon and put in what he must have. I ordered a hack as I came along: here it is now."

A few toilet articles and a change of linen were thrust into a bag. Carl took it, gaping as it was, and jumped into the hack after his father, who banged the door to, saying, "Fitchburg depot, as quick as possible."

The hackman drove rapidly.

"What's he going this way for?" asked the impatient Carl; "it's a great deal the farthest."

"He knows" said his father "the streets are not crowded this way."

When they reached the station, men were jostling each other at the ticket office, each eager to be served first, for the "All aboard". of the conductor admonished them that time was precious. Mr. Bartlett pushed his way up to the window and called for a ticket to Shiretown. "One for Shiretown for me too," came from behind, and an arm in a rough blue sleeve was thrust over his shoulder.

The two tickets were supplied, and father and son ran down the depot, closely followed by the purchaser of the other ticket. All three got into the rear car.

"It won't do for me to stop," said Mr. Bartlett. "I can trust you not to go out on

the platform; look out for your uncle when you get to Shiretown."

The seats were nearly all occupied, but Carl found one beside a lady. She got out soon, and the man he had seen at the ticket office came and took the place, saying, "You are going the same way I am."

A slight peculiarity of inflection, a dim sense of something heard before, caused Carl to look directly in the stranger's face. His features were those of a young man, but his expression was aged in its anxiety, and his eyes seemed as if they were watching intently for something in the far distance.

"Poor man," thought Carl, he must have been sick."

Boys are seldom unsocial travellers, and the man soon learned that Carl had spent, sometime the past summer at Clifton. After saying that he had been there once, he asked many questions about Clifton people. When

the train stopped at Shiretown, Carl's attention was so completely taken up by his uncle, that the stranger was forgotten.

"This way, my boy," said Mr. Randolph, going to a carryall at the end of the station house. A gentleman was sitting on the front seat holding the reins.

"This is my nephew and namesake, Carleton Randolph Bartlett, Mr. Murdock."

Mr. Murdock shook hands with Carl, and asked him to ride with him. Mr. Randolph took possession of the back seat.

"We had not time to get a lunch, Carl," said he, "so I plead for a hungry boy, with one of the waiters."

"That's jolly," said Carl, "enough sight better than that dark dining room at the Shiretown house."

He opened the lunch basket, Mr. Randolph handed him, and found cold chicken, apple pie, bread and butter, cake and a flask of milk.

We will not specify the exact quantity of each, but it was quite sufficient to satisfy the cravings of a boy who had eaten nothing, since breakfast, more substantial than popped corn.

They had not ridden far before the trees, houses, ect., at the roadside, began to look to Carl like old acquaintances.

"I've been over this road before," said he. "I know it, yes, it's the road to Clifton. Are we going to Uncle David's, Uncle Carl?"

"You are good at exercising the Yankee's ruling passion," was the answer. "Mr. Murdock and I have succeeded in finding the proof of Deacon Goodwin's right to his home, and I sent for you because I thought you would like to be the one to give it to him."

"Your uncle gives me altogether too much credit," said Mr. Murdock; "it was he who discovered the fraud. I am not much inclined to give advice out of my profession,

but you won't object to take some from me to-day. When you are a man, if you have the business of others intrusted to you, don't let your sense of your own importance prevent your transacting it properly; don't think you never can make a mistake. Then you will not have to do what I am doing now, go and beg an aged man's pardon for treating him brusquely, and for rewarding his implicit trust in you by carelessness."

"You are too hard upon yourself, Mr. Murdock," said Mr. Randolph; "the mistake was one that might have happened in many an office, under such circumstances."

"The mistake is one that ought not to happen in any office," said Mr. Murdock.

The two gentlemen told Carl all there was to be told of the way they discovered the papers, and of their long concealment; then Mr. Randolph gave them into his nephew's hands. After that the boy was silent; he was

trying to compose a speech for the occasion. A great many long words passed through his mind, but they would not fall into line, so as to march from his tongue in good order and single file.

When they stopped at Deacon Goodwin's door, his task was not done; the long words ran away in most cowardly style. With a single leap the boy sprang to the ground, ran round the corner of the house, found Deacon Goodwin, and gave him the papers, saying, "Uncle David, there's your mortgage. Josiah paid it just as you said he did. Uncle Carl found it for you."

"What bearers of good news you and Uncle Carl are. You were well named Carl, my noble, spirited boy," said Deacon Goodwin, taking both Carl's hands in his. "Where's your Uncle?"

"Oh! I forgot. He is round at the front door with Mr. Murdock."

Mrs. Goodwin had answered Mr. Randolph's knock.

"We brought a spokesman with us," said the gentleman as he went in, "but he has suddenly vanished. Ah, there he is."

Carl appeared holding Deacon Goodwin's hand, and talking rapidly. The story of the recovery of the papers was repeated, and Mr. Murdock said, "As the gross misconduct of an employee of mine has caused you all this pain and anxiety, it was but due you that I should come and express my sincere regret. I will gladly make you any reparation in my power. I suppose you are aware that you can recover heavy damages from the perpetrator of this fraud. I will take measures to bring a suit at once."

"I would much rather you would not," answered Deacon Goodwin. "I thank you heartily, but I am quite contented to be left in quiet possession of what is rightfully my own."

"Money would be no compensation, I know," said Mr. Murdock.

The front gate creaked on its hinges. Carl looked out of the window and exclaimed, "There's the man that came up in the cars with me; he's coming in here."

Mrs. Goodwin started from her chair and threw her arms around the man's neck. "My son, my son," the mother cried; it was indeed the long lost son returned to his father's house. "My son, my son, I thought the good Lord would give you back to me."

—— thread of many years
Had been sometimes soiled by tears,
Knotted, too, by cares and fears,

but Mrs. Goodwin's love for, and her trust in the good Lord had not flagged; they would have continued unshaken, had He never in this world brought the wanderer home.

For a few moments Josiah seemed to forget that there were others beside his parents in

the room; but after he had again and again embraced them, he turned, and seeing Carl, said, "So you are the boy who has been a better son to my father and mother, than I, their own flesh and blood have."

"I wish I had known you was Josiah," said Carl.

"He told me a good deal about what has been happening here for the last few weeks," said Josiah, "and the rest I got from Mr. Wright; he brought me along nearly all the way. He told me what the boy didn't; who it was that had friends to take up for my father and mother when I had deserted them. If you, sir," he said, speaking to Mr. Randolph, "had not found out Downing's rascality just as you did, he might have destroyed the proofs, and who would have taken my word against the records?" and Josiah shook hands heartily with both uncle and nephew.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. MURDOCK, fearing he might be an unwelcome witness of family joys, proposed to Mr. Randolph that they should start on their return to Shiretown.

"I don't want to go home and not see the Grays, Uncle," said Carl.

"Mrs. Gray is not expecting us," said Mr. Randolph.

"Oh, that's no matter; she'll like it; she don't get into a snarl at nothing."

"I think we will trespass on Mrs. Gray's hospitality to-night," said Mr. Randolph.

With heartfelt congratulations, Mr. Murdock took leave of the united family. Still

Carl lingered. At last he went to Josiah, and taking hold of his arm, said, "I wish you'd tell us what made you go away."

"Perhaps Josiah does not care to tell you that," said Mr. Randolph.

"I don't want you to tell me if you don't want to," said Carl.

"I couldn't say no to any thing you asked me," said Josiah; "I can't say it would be altogether pleasant to talk about my going away, and I don't suppose there's any danger of your getting where I did; but if I can save you from sailing at all on that tack, I'll tell you about it.

'I used to go over to Parker's Mills pretty often, and I got acquainted with some boys about as old as I was; they worked in the factory there. One afternoon I was over there, and one of the fellows, Ringold his name was, asked me to stay in the evening and have a game of whist with them. I told

him I couldn't play whist. 'Well, euchre,' says he. 'I can't play euchre, either,' says I. 'You don't mean to say you don't know how to play whist or euchre,' says he; 'come along, and we'll show you how; it's time you knew.

'The first time I saw Ringold, I didn't like his looks at all. He was a short, fat fellow, and had a horse-laugh, loud enough to be heard from one end of the town to the other; but after I had seen him a few times, he didn't look so homely to me, and I got used to his laughing. This time though, when he laughed at me, he looked uglier than ever; and if I'd done just as I wanted to, I should have gone right off, and let him have his laugh out.

'I was a fool I didn't break away from him then; it would have been a good deal better for me, and other folks too, if I had; but the fact was, if I did despise him, I couldn't bear

to have him laugh at me. So instead of going right off, as I ought to, I stopped to talk with him. 'Oh, yes,' says he, 'I see how it is; you're afraid of the deacon. I'm glad I ain't a deacon's son, with the whole meeting-house, and the old man to boot at my back, chaining me up in the way I won't go. Nobody dares to tell me I shan't shuffle a pack of cards.' 'Nobody tells me so,' say I.'

"I'm telling more of this than I should, but I want the youngster to hear it. I don't suppose there is any danger of his getting in as deep as I did, but it's no harm for him to know that there are people in the world, suppose they are round everywhere, he may come athwart 'em; I say it's no harm for him to know from a fellow that's been through the mills, that there are people all ready to laugh him into mischief. Aye! and all ready to laugh at him after they've

got him in. Father never did tell us we must not play cards."

"The fact is," Deacon Goodwin interposed, "cards have been the devil's tool so often, and have helped to drag so many poor young men down, I didn't want to see my boys handling them."

"They didn't handle 'em," said Josiah. "I don't believe there was one of my brothers that knew any thing more about cards than father does. I'll go on with my yarn. I went into the tavern with Ringold, into a side room, where there were some fellows playing, and took a hand. It wan't long before I understood the rules pretty well. Ringold and the other fellows said I'd make a first rate player, and before I got away, they made me promise to come again the next night.

"It was late when I got home, and the folks were gone to bed. The next morning father told me he didn't like to have me out

so late. He was all reasonable enough, but it made me kind of mad, and I didn't say much. When it came towards night, I believe I should have staid at home, but I felt cross, and I'd promised Ringold and the other fellows I'd come, and I thought they'd laugh at me the next time I saw them if I didn't, so after supper, I slipped out and went over to the tavern.

"When we'd played a game or two, Ringold said he was dry, and called for some ale, and we had a glass all round. They told me again what a splendid player I'd make, and all that sort of thing. Well, it went on so for a while, we'd have something to drink every night, ale or cider, and then the cider wasn't strong enough, so they'd put brandy in it; then it got to be brandy and no cider, till most every night I'd be fairly drunk. Some nights I'd go home, and some I'd be too far gone to go. I used to wake in the morning

with a headache, and I'd feel ashamed enough of myself, and I'd think what a fool I was.

"I was pretty sure, from some things that leaked out, that Ringold was a sort of whipper in for the tavern-keeper. He used to get what he wanted to drink for nothing, if he brought a good many customers. For all I thought so, when it came night, I'd feel so miserable and good for nothing, off I'd go again. Or if I did stay away a day or two, I couldn't look any body in the face. There was once or twice though, that I did try to give up and get rid of those Parker Mills fellows altogether.

"The last time, I stayed at home for a week and worked on the farm, but the work seemed harder than it used to, and I didn't like it as well, but I stuck to it for a week; then I heard father talking about the mortgage. I told him I'd go over to Shirtown for him. I drove over there and paid the money, and

left the mortgage at Mr. Murdock's office, and I never thought I'd left the note till I'd got half way home; but I thought it would be safe enough there.

"I meant to go right home, but when I got abreast of the tavern at Parker's mills, Ringold came out. I found out afterwards that he had seen me when I went along, and was watching for me to come back. He hailed me and wanted me to come in just a minute, he said. I knew he'd been drinking, but I went on with him to the room where I'd been many a time. I don't know why it was that it never seemed so to me before, perhaps they were worse than common that night. At any rate, they were drunk and I sober. It had been pay-day that day, and they had been playing for money, and some of them were quarreling and——but no matter, I hope my boy will never see such a place

"I looked in a minute and then I turned round and walked off. They called after me, and some of 'em took hold of me, but I shook 'em off and jumped into the wagon, and whipped up the horse till I was out of sight; then I let him walk and I thought,— but I don't know as you care to hear what I thought."

"Yes, yes, we do," said Mr. Randolph, "go on."

"Well, I thought here you are, Josiah Goodwin, you've got as much brains naturally as half the young fellows in the town; you used to have as strong an arm and as steady a hand, as any young man need to have; you never used to be ashamed to stand beside any young chap for looks, and you could be even with the best of 'em in any thing you set out to do. Now, how is it? You can hardly put two ideas together, and as for muscle — I held out my hand and it shook as if it was on a spiral.

What's such a wrist as that good for? What sort of a looking face was that you saw in the glass this morning? All puffed and bloated, and if you meet anybody you feel any respect for, you want to skulk round a corner, so as not to be seen."

"Just look at what you are giving up. Mind, strength, nerve, respectability, all your chance of ever being anybody in this world, and in another — but I didn't want to think much about another world."

"And what is the other side of the bargain, Josiah Goodwin?" said I to myself. "What do you get for all this? You're hail fellow, well met, with such crew as you met to night, that's the other side of the bargain."

"And then I thought of my old mother, and of the tears I saw in her eyes that morning when I couldn't get my cup to my lips without spilling half the coffee; you see when I'd been drinking, and stopped, I'd shake worse than when I'd keep steady on.

"Then I thought of my father, that never said a harsh word to me, for all I was his last child, and was disgracing him, and breaking his heart.

"We will have no more of this," says I, "it wouldn't be any worse for father and mother if I were dead; if I can't be a respectable man here, I'll go away and stay away till I can come home a man that nobody need be ashamed of."

"I went to New Bedford; I thought if I could get a berth aboard a whale ship that was going a long voyage I would. I couldn't get a berth there, and I went up to Boston. When I was there I came across Downing. I thought he'd come home and tell he saw me, for he took the trouble to find out what ship I sailed in, and all he could, but I suppose he was looking out for himself and not for me. I didn't speak to him, because I didn't want to answer his questions. He thought I didn't see him.

I felt pretty bad then, no home, and no friends."

"Oh yes, Josiah, you have always had home and friends."

"Yes, I know, Mother, but I had thrown them away, as I had everything else. When we sailed by Boston light I felt the worst. I believe I should have come back then, if I could. I had a pretty hard time of it for a few weeks. I was sick enough, but there was no escape from duty; sick or well, I must take my watch on deck. I was a land-lubber and didn't know what I ought to do and what I oughtn't, and the sailors used to put upon me, and laugh at me. You see, Carl, that's your name, isn't it, 'tain't easy getting away from being laughed at. I suppose I did look doleful. I felt bad enough any how, and the salt-junk and hard tack, and black coffee, wasn't much like mother's meat and light bread, and coffee with cream in it.

"After a while I got my sea legs on, and

the salt air I wasn't used to made me hungry as a wolf. I could eat the biscuit and hard junk if I did have to cut my meat with a jack knife, and I drank my black coffee out of my tin cup and smacked my lips over it. I got so as to climb the rigging with the spryest of them. I think the officers and the crew took a liking to me. Some of the men said I'd be a first rate sailor if I'd only be jolly. I couldn't be jolly, I was thinking of home all the time. I used to keep the run of the difference in the bells and the old clock at home, and I'd think what was going on there. If it was six o'clock at Clifton, I'd think now they are just sitting down to tea. If 'twas a little later, I'd see the sitting room, father reading, and mother with her knitting work, and old Tab winking at the wood fire. I couldn't be jolly for I saw a good many such pictures as that.

"Well, to cut a long story short, we made

our first port all right, then we sailed for another, and we were wrecked. I won't stop to tell you about that."

"I should like to hear about it," said Carl; but Mr. Randolph, who noticed the painful expression on Josiah's face, interposed.

"Not now, Carl. When Josiah's sufferings are not quite so fresh in his mind, perhaps he will tell you about them; you must not ask him to now."

"Well, I can tell you about it, but I'd rather let it be now. Everybody on board was lost but six of us. I hope you will never go through what I did, but if you are ever in an open boat, with nothing to shade you from the sun right overhead, without a drop of water; glad to chew a piece of your boot, crowded into a small boat with men, so crazy with thirst and hunger, you're afraid they'll put their knives into your throat; and you daren't sleep, or if you do sleep a minute or two, you dream of the green

grass you used to play on when you were a little shaver, and of the well bucket, full and dripping over, then wake, your tongue so swollen you can't keep it in your mouth : —

"I say, if you ever know what such things are, I hope you won't have to remember a father and mother whom you have deserted in their old age. I hope you can't have to remember that you have been a coward, and let boys you despised lead you by the nose, till, like a coward, you have run away from them.

"I've been a coward and a deserter, but by God's help I'll be so no longer. I'll stand by my colors. I'll do my duty as well as I can, where God has placed me. I have done what I could to make as good a father and a mother as boy ever had unhappy. Now, all I want to know is, what can I do to make them happy ?"

"Come, Carl," said Mr. Randolph, "'early to bed and early to rise,' is the rule at Mr Gray's, I suppose ; we must go."

If "early to bed" was the rule of the Gray homestead, it was not the order of that night. Its occupants sat till a late hour talking over the events of the last few weeks. After a time Carl relapsed into silence.

"I wonder what he is thinking about," was his uncle's mental query, a query which the boy soon answered, in this wise, "I used to think that it was the fathers' and mothers' business to take care of us boys and girls and see that we had a good time, but I've found out that the boys and girls can do ever so much to make their fathers and mothers comfortable,—and ever so much to make them miserable too.

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